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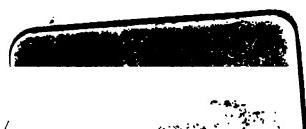
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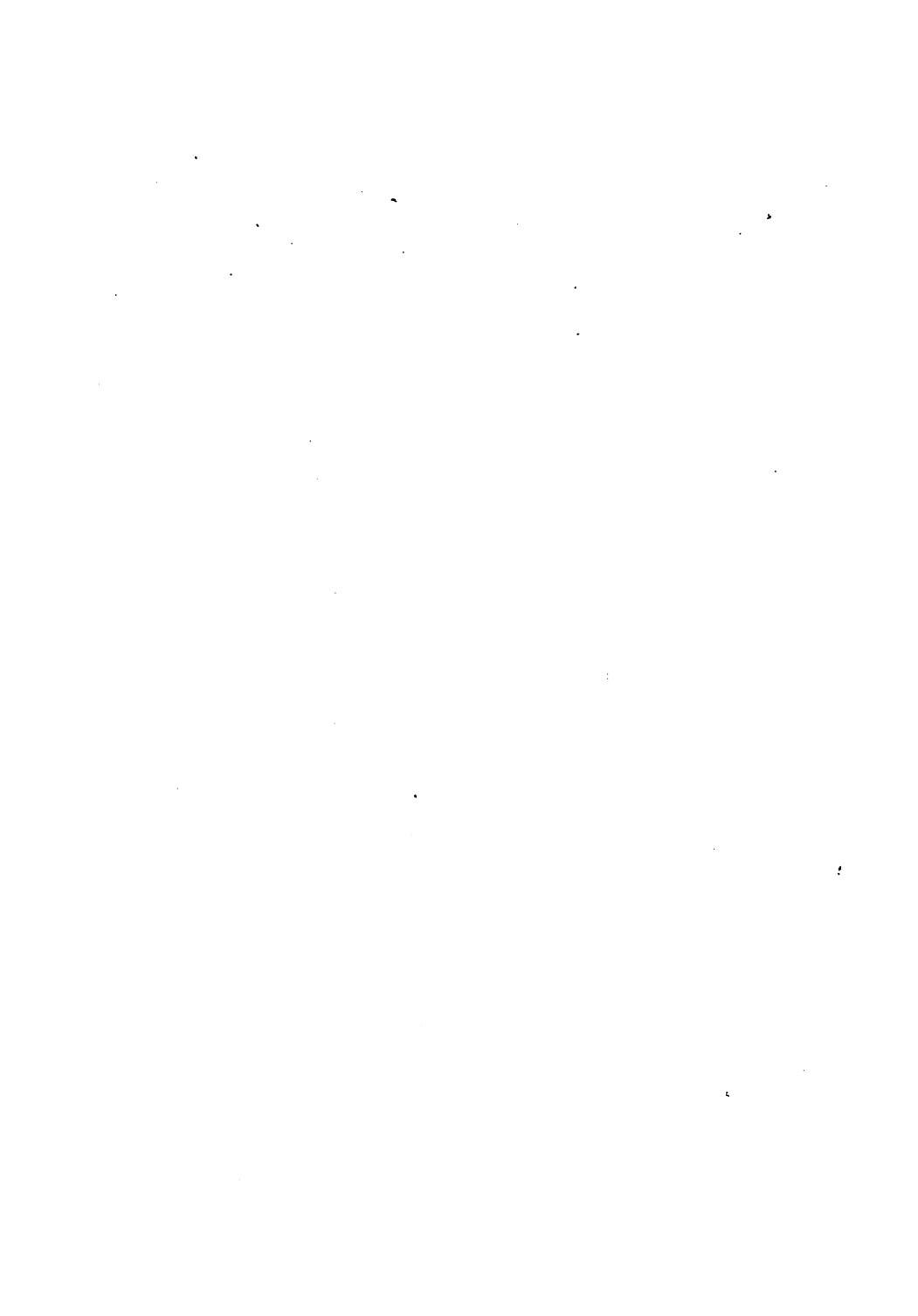
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EARL HAKON THE MIGHTY.

BY OEHLENSCHLÄGER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH

BY

FRANK C. LASCELLES.



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LITTLE QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELD.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

OLAF TRYGVESON, King of Dublin.

HAKON, EARL OF HLADE, surnamed the Mighty, Ruler of Norway.

ERLING, his son.

THORER KLAKE, merchant.

CARLSHOVED } Olaf's kinsmen.
JOSTEIN }

EINAR TAMBESKJAELVER, a young archer.

BERGTHOR, smith; spokesman of the Trondhjem peasants.

GUDRUN } his daughters.
ASTRID }

ORM } betrothed to GUDRUN and ASTRID.
THORWALD }

THYRA, the Earl's mistress.

THANGBRAND, a priest.

ANDEN, an old one-eyed man.

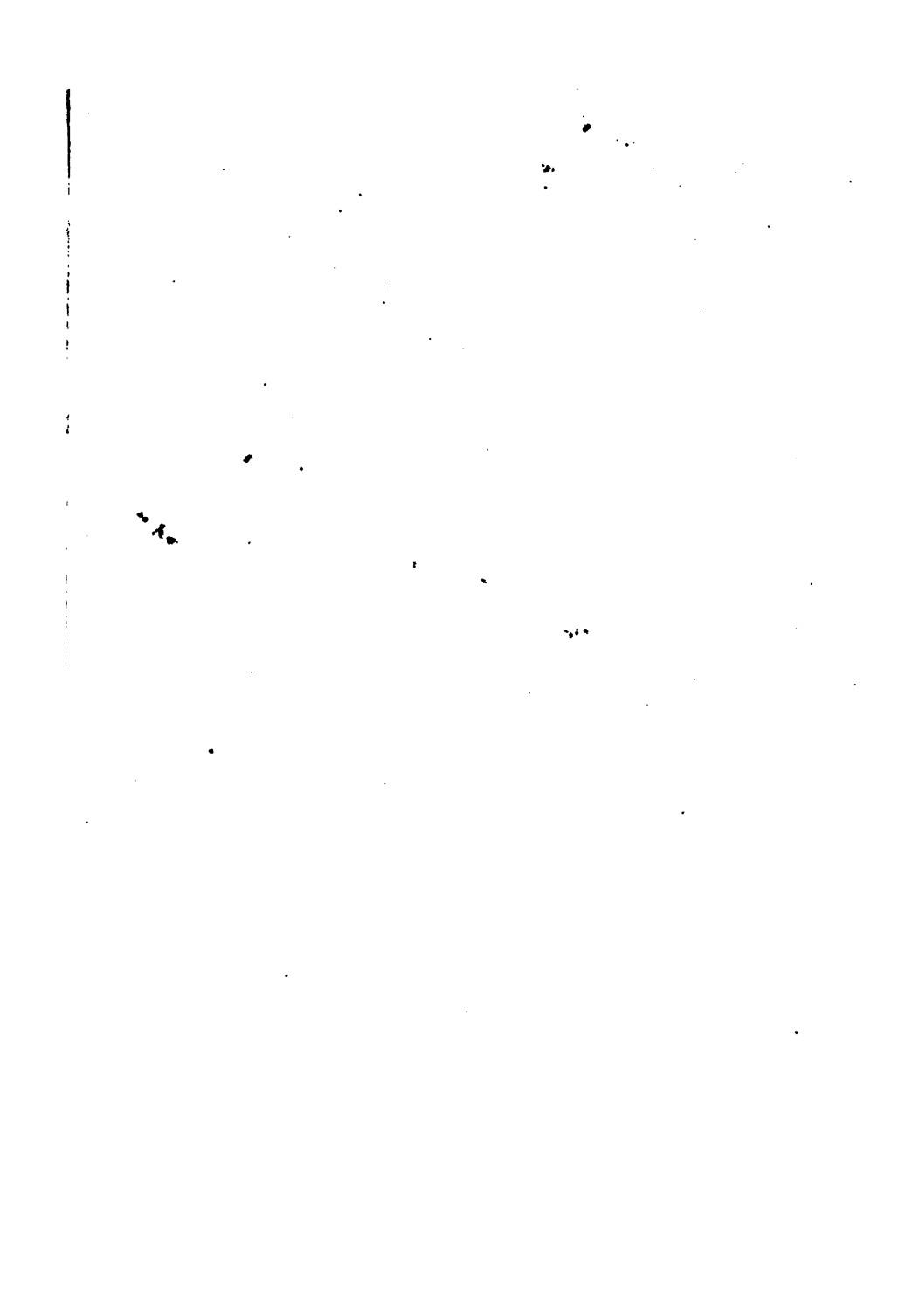
GRIB, Thorer's thrall.

KARKER }
STEIN } the Earl's thralls.
LEIF }

A MESSENGER.

INGER, Thyra's handmaid.

Priests, Warriors, Peasants, and Thralls.



THE HALL OF MUSEUM

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EARL HAKON THE MIGHTY.

ACT I.

HLADE.

A place surrounded by trees, outside the Earl's Castle; in the background part of the building with open windows. KARKER and GRIB are seated under the trees with a dish of meat and a jug of beer. Sounds of merriment are heard inside the Hall.

KARKER.

Hark, what a noise they make,—what merriment!
I hear the voice of Thorer Klake, thy master;
He talks about his voyages abroad.

GRIB.

He's right to do so. 'Tis worth while to listen
How cunningly he has disposed his wares
On every coast around, in every town,
And massed up gold and silver in exchange;

2 *Earl Hakon the Mighty.*

My master has a shrewd and cunning head ;
He should have lived in Harald Greyskin's time.

KARKER.

And why in his ?

GRIB.

Because he was a king
Who helped the trades' and lands' development ;
A king, who for his country's welfare did
Put off his purple cloak and all its gold,
And clad himself in sheepskin, modestly.

KARKER.

And therefore people call him Harald Greyskin ?

GRIB.

To his eternal honour, yes. For that
He was a king of hucksters ; all his fleet
Composed of trade ships ; his sceptre was an ell.
A noble hero.

KARKER.

Well, but take good care,
And do not praise him overmuch just now ;
Now rules the Earl, and he cannot endure
To hear others too much talked about.

GRIB.

Thanks for your council, crafty friend.

KARKER.

No thanks.

But now, can you not tell me something new ?

We ne'er hear anything ; here we must sit
And wonder, silent in our solitude.

GRIB.

Ha ! He who would venture now to enter there,
Sit down at table, and with unchained hand
Seize the gold horn among the other freemen,—

KARKER.

Forbid it, gods ! What strange depravity !
Beware, and be contented with your fate,
For you and I were both in thraldom born.

GRIB.

And thus in torpor would you lull your soul ?

KARKER.

And wherefore not ? That which one cannot change
Must be, and will be as it is.

GRIB.

Oh ! yes.

KARKER.

What is't we want ? Have we not got on well ?
You Thorer Klake supports, and Hakon me.
Now, it is plain that I am better off
Than you ; your master is a merchant, whilst
Mine is much greater ; yes, he is an Earl,
And the most mighty Earl in all the land,—
Has all the other sixteen under him.
And now, indeed, he is almost a king.
How ! is my fate not happy ? Formerly

I had to drive the plough, to heap up dung,
 And find my rest in pigsties many a night.
 Now I have got good clothing, plenteous food,
 Little to do, in winter a warm room,
 Am seldom beaten.

GRIB.

You were born for it.

KARKER.

My master Hakon oft has said the same.
 He had sought long before he found a man
 Like me. He has his fancies, mark you well ;—
 He says, and it is true, a thrall should be
 Obedient, faithful, without pride himself,
 And strong to fight, his master to protect.

GRIB.

In short, all that is wanted in a dog.

KARKER.

As soon as Hakon had set eyes on me
 He found me such a one as he would have ;
 He saw my broad low forehead, and he saw
 My short thick fingers, and my flattened nose,
 My steady carriage also he remarked,
 And found that all was just as he desired.
 Now I am with him daily ; there are few
 Who are so well informed about the things
 Which occupy him through the years and day.

GRIB.

Hush, silence, hark ! They now do talk again
Of Olaf Trygveson.

KARKER.

And who is he,

This Olaf ?

GRIB.

Oh ! a noble hero he ;
He was a thrall like me, now brother-in-law
To Dublin's king—yes, even king himself.

KARKER.

And born and bred a thrall ?

GRIB.

Not born such, no !

He was a king's son.

KARKER.

Well, in such a way
It is not difficult to be a king.

GRIB.

For Olaf it was no such easy thing,
For while he yet lay in his mother's womb
Was cruel fate inimical to him.

KARKER.

See, here they come ! Stand up, here comes the
Earl

From breakfasting, surrounded by his men.

(HAKON and his warriors cross the stage.)

GRIB.

And qld and noble hero is the Earl,
And towers as a knotted oak above
The other brushwood.

KARKER.

See, he now will go
To take, as is his wont, his daily walk.
But I must go and clear away the things,
And have an eye upon the other thralls ;
Will you come too ?

GRIB.

No, here will I remain--
Here in this great high palace that was built
As well for me as for the best of them.

(*Exit among the trees.*)

KARKER.

Aye, great it is ! Well, go and take the air
Whilst I will lick the plates, and let Thor judge
Which of us two now shows the greatest sense.

(*Exit.*)

A SACRED GROVE.

With the statues of the twelve great gods carved in stone; Odin's in the centre. The sun is setting and casts its last rays over them. Enter GUDRUN and ASTRID, the first with a wreath of flowers.

ASTRID.

Gudrun, Gudrun! Oh, whither dost thou lead?
How dared we in the grove of the high gods,
Where no unconsecrated foot may tread?

GUDRUN.

Those who love faithfully and honestly
Are consecrated, therefore thou and I.

ASTRID.

My heart beats ; sister, see, behold, behold !
The mighty gods ! How solemnly they stand,
And with severe and threatening aspect gaze
On us. Offend the gods not. Sister, come.

GUDRUN.

Not all their countenances are severe,
The mighty Frigga as a mother smiles ;
And seest thou here, the slender, lovely Freia ?
Not merely motherly, but full of love,
She smiles upon her youthful daughters here.

ASTRID.

In thy rare beauty she delights, Gudrun,
And knows, as every young Norwegian swain,
Thou art the forest sun.

Earl Hakon the Mighty.

GUDRUN.

My good Astrid,

Do thou go home before me and prepare
 Our father's supper well and properly.
 He forges now Earl Hakon's royal crown ;
 And when he finishes his daily work,
 He wearied is and hungry like the best.
 Go thou before ; I follow thee as soon
 As I this wreath of flowers have completed.

ASTRID.

In vain the labour ; wherefore this adornment ?
 Thou knowest that Orm cannot come to-night,—
 To-morrow they will wither.

GUDRUN.

Go thou first,

And leave me here.

ASTRID.

Ah, well ! thou art in love,
 And those in love seek solitude, 'tis known.
 Oh ! see how beautifully sets the sun,
 And with his purple rays does peep into
 The dusky thicket ; even so does peep
 One forest sun upon the other here. (*Exit.*)

GUDRUN.

I am alone. Oh, mighty holy gods !
 Be not displeased that I, a guiltless maid,
 With anxious, trembling feet have dared to step
 Within your gloomy and mysterious grove.

Oh, lovely Freia ! Oh, great goddess mine !
Say, may I venture ? I have woven here
A wreath of thy fair flowers. Sweet are they,
And in the evening glow of summer sun
They stood and played like elves of light. Oh,
Freia !

Forgive thy maid, that she with anxious step
Approaches thus thy mighty statue here,
And that she lightly winds her flower-wreath
Round thy fair locks.

(She steps on to the pedestal of the statue and places the wreath on Freia's head. At the same moment enter EARL HAKON and THORER KLAKE. GUDRUN remains by the statue trembling and silent.)

HAKON.

We are alone, for in the sacred grove
None dare intrude, save only Odin's priests
And Hakon.

THORER.

Noble Earl, thy confidence
Makes Thorer proud.

HAKON.

So, Thorer, thou didst think
That what was said at breakfast-time to-day
Of Olaf Trygveson was new to me ;
Is it not so ?

THORER.

By thy astonishment,
And thy attentive mien to judge,—in short,
If I may trust to what thy face expressed,
'Twas new indeed.

HAKON.

Rely not on my face.

My face is mine, and always must obey
Its lord; and therefore what I seem,
I seem to be; it needs be that I seem
Among the crowd. But here we are alone;
Know, therefore, that I knew of Trygveson
Before thou spakest his name to me to-day.

THORER.

'Tis not improbable the hero's fame
Ere this has reached thy ears, my lord; but now
It would appear thou givest to this affair
Far more importance than it seems to need.

HAKON.

Give me thy hand as thou art true to me.

THORER.

Thou knowest, my lord, that all my worldly wealth
I have from thee; thou gavest me ships, and thee
Alone I thank for my prosperity.

HAKON.

Thou art of my Elect, and my good Thorer,

Oh ! much I have longed for thee, for thou art
cunning
To carry out what thou hast turned thy mind to ;
And if an unexpected hindrance comes,
Thou'rt bold to act ; canst use both sword and axe
As well as thou canst use thy intellect ;
So should it be.

THORER.

Odin provided us
With various powers, which all must be employed,
And none should be neglected for the others.

HAKON.

Man feels his destiny, and if innate,
His bent of mind develops innate force ;
He carries out his plans as best he can,
And needs no other warrant for his deeds.

THORER.

Thy words are weighty, my good lord.

HAKON.

And I
Have ever felt a strong desire to rule ;
To govern Norway's ancient kingdom was
My highest and my greatest thought.

THORER.

My lord,
'Twas worthy of thee, and what thou hast wished
Thou now hast gained.

HAKON.

Alas ! not quite, my friend,
 Not quite, in great part ; but, as yet, not quite ;
 Still people call me only Hakon Earl.
 Earl was I born and bred, and for that rank
 Should not have waged a contest so severe.

THORER.

Now all depends on thee ; and, shouldst thou choose,
 Will all the people hail thee as a king.

HAKON.

My hope is such indeed. My Norsemen proud
 Will feel it is more honourable to be
 Ruled over by a king than by an earl.
 To the first Thing which now I call together
 I will submit my wishes, proud they are.
 Bergthor, the smith, that ancient valiant man,
 Is working daily at my royal crown ;
 When it is finished shall the Thing assemble.

THORER.

Whatever happens, still thou art a king.

HAKON.

Nought but the merchant's profit touches thee ;
 External splendour must not be despised,
 For that with force and cunning I have fought ;
 A maid's embraces are not half so sweet
 As a crown's pressure on a royal brow.
 I almost touch the goal, but the day wanes ;

And, as in Eivind Skaldaspilder's song,
The herbs bend down beneath the evening dew,
Now is my black hair mingled here and there
With locks of white. Give me thy hand again.

(THORER gives him his hand, HAKON squeezes
it, and then says, looking down.)

When formerly I squeezed a hand, the blood
Would spirt like fruit-juice from beneath the nails.
Didst feel my hand-grip ? Tell me honestly.

THORER.

A man should ne'er complain, however strong
The grip upon his hand.

HAKON.

Mine was not strong,

Thou wouldest but make me think it was ; now see,
My forehead how it is ploughed through and through
With wrinkles.

THORER.

Wrinkles but adorn a man.

HAKON.

But Norway's maidens cannot suffer them.
In short, my friend, that I am getting old
I do perceive, and therefore will I now
Enjoy my evening hours. My sun shall set
In peaceful and in glorious brilliancy,
And woe the cloud that would o'ershadow it.

THORER.

Where is that cloud, my liege ?

HAKON.

Where ? In the west.
There, where I would not have it.

THORER.

Dost thou speak
Of Dublin's Olaf ?

HAKON.

Yes ; he does descend
In line direct, from Harald the fair-haired.
Friend, the Norwegian peasants are, thou know'st,
A race of warriors, noble, faithful, brave,
But full of prejudice and superstition ;
Be sure that all my worth, and all my might,
Would be forgot in Olaf's royal birth,
If ever it were known he was alive.

THORER.

Thou dost but fancy that.

HAKON.

Nay, Thorer Klake,
I know my people better ; and shall now
This traitor, shall this wild enthusiast
Ascend the throne ?

THORER.

A traitor, my good lord ?

HAKON.

I stood with all my men at Danevirke,
And all my men were Norsemen ; with the foe
Stood Olaf, and he helped the Christian Otto
To burn the northern fortress. Traitor, yes ;
Does that surprise thee ! Is he then not such
Who has proved faithless to his country's gods ?

THORER.

Not faithless. Ne'er did Trygveson believe
In northern gods.

HAKON.

A mocker of the gods,
Shall he now place himself on Norway's throne ?

THORER.

Who dreams of such a thing ?

HAKON.

I, my good friend,
And, maybe, Olaf also. Harald's race
Had all been rooted out, save him alone ;
My earldom is as old, as great as that ;
Since Arild's time the Earl of Hlade has
Been mightiest and nearest to the crown.
Now none of them are left,—this dreamer only,
Who northern faith and custom has abjured ;
A freebought thrall, born in a wilderness
In travelling through a wood, his father dead,
How very easy 'tis to be a prince
In such a manner ! By Valhalla's gods

He shall not hinder me ! Ye mighty gods,
 He shall not daringly your power assault.
 Oh ! thou wise Odin ! Mighty Auka, Thor,
 And Freia—

(*He goes back towards the statues of gods, and perceives GUDRUN.*)

Ha ! what is it I perceive ?

GUDRUN.

Ah ! good my lord, forgive me. Oh ! alas,
 I am half dead with terror and with shame.
 I know it is forbidden to approach
 The gloomy sanctuary of the mighty gods ;
 Forgive me, noble lord.

HAKON.

My pretty maid,
 What wouldst thou in the grove ? Didst thou come
 here
 To listen to my talk ? I fear, indeed,
 A spy.

GUDRUN.

By Freia and my innocence,
 I have not heard a word, and long ago
 I had sprung down, but feared to fall or to
 Disclose myself.

HAKON.

But wherefore art thou here ?

GUDRUN.

Alas ! necessity does make me speak ;
I am the child of Bergthor, thy old Smith,
Betrothed to Orm Lyrgia ; thus, my lord,
I had a wreath of flowers bound for Freia,
And ventured in the grove ; forgive that I
The statue of my goddess would adorn.

HAKON.

Ha ! happy, lovely meeting ! Of the grove
Thou art the fairest among all the maids,
And 'tis for this the young love-stricken swains
Have called thee Forest Sun.

GUDRUN.

Alas ! my lord,
Let me come down. I promise solemnly
That I will never more place here my feet.

HAKON.

By Freia in Folkvangur, she is lovely.
Come, pretty darling, let me help thee down.

(*He takes her up in his arms, and carries her across the stage.*)

Light as a feather, a luxuriant blossom,
And like a closed and swelling lily bud !
Tell me, my pretty one, how pleases thee
Thy throne upon Earl Hakon's mighty arm ?

GUDRUN.

For Heaven's sake, my lord, come set me down ;
Profane not thus the holy sanctuary.

HAKON.

(Somewhat confused ; sets her down and gives
a sidelong look towards the gods.)

Profane ! my lovely maiden ; tell me how
Can such sweet lips as thine give utterance to
Such childish nonsense. Ah ! what plump white
hands. (He kisses them.)

GUDRUN.

By all thou holdest sacred let me go.

HAKON.

(Putting his arm round her waist.)

And cunningly had Bergthor guarded thee,
And when I wished to see thee, thou hadst gone
To visit thy relations—Thor knows what !
In Gudbrandsdalen.

GUDRUN.

What is there to see
In me, poor maid, to peasant poor betrothed.
Oh ! he is jealous, lord, and if he came—
Oh ! let me go.

HAKON.

And if he came, what fear ?
For I will straightway bid myself as guest

Unto your wedding ; and, truth, will not
Forget the marriage gift:

GUDRUN.

Oh ! let me go.

HAKON.

No, not from Freia's grove shalt thou escape,
Until thou hast embraced me.

GUDRUN.

Oh ! great heaven.

HAKON.

Great heaven, what ! Dost thou refuse a kiss
To Hakon, soon to be proud Norway's king,
And shall he long solicit ?

GUDRUN.

Help me, Freia !

(*He snatches a kiss. She runs off.*)

HAKON.

Thou fleest hind. The old bear cannot now
With quickness overtake thee in thy flight.
But wait. But wait.

THORER.

Earl Hakon !

HAKON.

Ha ! what beauty !

Didst thou perceive the long, the golden hair,
Bound round in tresses broad and intertwined

With ribbons red ? Her round arms didst thou see ?
 Didst see the heavenly blue eyes full of love ?
 The white and swelling bosom, which did threaten
 To burst its silver fetters ?

THORER.

Dear my lord.

HAKON.

Oh ! what was Berglioth's beauty ; what, indeed,
 Thyra of Rimol's beauty unto hers ?

THORER.

By Odin, she is lovely ! but, my lord,
 Do not forget why we have come ; remember
 That thou wouldest matters of importance tell
 Unto thy servant here.

HAKON.

Importance ? how !

Fast frozen Icicle, canst thou not feel
 The glow of love's flame burning in thy breast ?
 Ha ! feel my heart ; there beats the pulse of youth.
 And wherefore should I not desire to be
 The ruler of a wide, extended land,
 Unless it should be my desire and right
 To pluck the blossoms on the spot they grow ?

THORER.

But, Olaf, my dear lord.

HAKON.

Ha! that is true.

'Tis well that I did notice her at once.
She swore that she had nothing heard. I do
Believe her; by her innocence she swore.
See, there come Jostein and Carlshoved. I
Was waiting but for them.

(Enter JOSTEIN and CARLSHOVED. HAKON
goes towards them.)

Thrice welcome here.
Here have I three of my most trusty friends.
Would I could offer each of you my hand
At once.

CARLSHOVED.

That we are dear to thee, my lord,
Is our greatest pride.

HAKON.

Ye both do know
What long have been the wishes of my heart,
And why in privacy I summoned you.
The cunning Thorer, whom I waited for
To carry out my purpose, does but know
It partially. Now, therefore, hear me speak.
In wars and tumults has my life been spent;
And many a stone and many a noxious weed
Had first to be removed and rooted out
Before the pine had strength to shoot aloft
With all the force the great gods granted it.

Ye are my friends ; and now to you I can
With confidence entrust my heart's desire.
My name is honoured widely in the north,
And I by war have gained the foremost place ;
'Tis but my foes who can misjudge my deeds.
Harald the Weak, the Greyskin, and his brothers
Ruined the land ; for lacking strength and might,
Was each unable to acquire the rights
That he was born to. Like a game of dwarfs,
They wallowed up and down among themselves,
And by each other's murderous hands were slain.
But Harald Greyskin was a hindrance. I
Acknowledge that by craft I counterbalanced
All the good fortune granted him by fate.
'Tis said that I have acted ill towards
The brother of the Danish King. How so ?
The coward merchant, tired of his gold
And wishing from his brother to obtain-
Part of the kingdom, trusts himself to me.
I did deceive his abject confidence ;
Enticed the Greyskin thither, and by nought
But hope of gain alone. He, like gold Harald,
Did not deserve to wear the royal crown.
At Liimsfjord they both fell, and Halse was
The common grave of dull rapacity ;
And Harald Blaatand sees his kingdom now
Unshorn and undivided, and by me.
And sure no man of Norway can regret
That I defied him, since he did demand

Homage and taxes and obedience.
All my whole life, and also my last work
At Hjorningsvaag, where Jomsborg's power fell,
Where Bue, in despair, leapt overboard,
His arm-stump through the gold chest's handle
thrust,
Has proved that I possess both strength and craft.
Now the sun sinks, and only one short hour
Of evening splendour yet remains to me ;
That shall not be o'ershadowed. Trygveson
Alone remains of all the ancient race.
Thou thinkst that he in Bretland stays in peace ;
What wouldest thou say, most prudent, crafty
Thorer,
If I should say to thee that he is here ?

THORER.

Here ?

CARLSHOVED.

Here, in Norway ?

JOSTEIN.

Olaf ! can it be ?

HAKON.

I well might laugh as thou at breakfast-time
Relatedst, Thorer, with sagacious mien,
Betokening weighty and important news
About thy royal friend in Ireland,
The pious Olaf ! as if long ago

I had not kept a watchful eye on him.
Then I was silent ; now 'tis time to speak.
So know, this morning news was brought to me
By one of the small barks, which day and night
Do watch the coast, that Olaf, with his fleet,
To Valdemar, the King of Russia, sails,
But that he on his road put in to Moster
To visit, as he calls it, once again
His fatherland.

THORER.

King Olaf ! can it be ?

HAKON.

Now, whether in reality he has
Stopped on his way enthusiastically
To fill once more his lungs with mountain air,
I do not know, nor do I care to know ;
But what I will know, as you well conceive,
Is whether with this innocent design
He hides another. I have my eye on him.
Thou art his friend, is it not natural
That thou shouldst visit him as soon as thou
Hear'st of his coming ? Now the wind is fresh,
And ere to-morrow dawns thou canst be there.
Wilt thou thus of thy friendship give me proof,
And sail to meet him ? and whilst as a friend
Shallst tell him what thou wilt, take heed that he
Should hear no other rumours save from thee.

THORER.

My lord, what is thy object ?

HAKON.

As I say,

To find out Olaf's object ; above all,
To seek a strife with him. Now, thou hast craft
And cunning, and know'st how to manage men ;
How easy for thee, then, to make him stay
Until I thither with my ships shall come ?
He also has a fleet, and force to force
Is the old northern custom ; as to that
Nought can be said, I fancy.

CARLSHOVED.

No, indeed.

THORER.

But how shall I persuade him to remain ?

HAKON.

Oh, strike upon the strings which touch him most ;
Sing him the songs he best does love to hear ;
And tell him,—how, my Thorer, thou know'st best,
The country is with Hakon not content,
And here and there are murmurs heard ; the peasants
In many places wait but for a sign
And for a leader. Make him come to land.
I'd sooner meet him there, for I am old
And cannot bear the sea. Should he not stay,
But, as he first intended, should proceed,

Despite the crown which beckons from the shore,
 Then he is honest, I have done him wrong,
 Then let him sail his course. I am content.

THORER.

My lord, thou speakest wisely ; and now I,
 As best I can, will execute thy wish.

HAKON.

Not unrewarded shalt thou, my good friend,
 Have served me thus.

THORER.

My lord, I am aware
 That Hakon always royally rewards.
 Thou knowest that I am faithful.

HAKON.

(*Taking his hand.*)

Honest Thorer.

CARLSHOVED.

If Olaf should invade, as well may be,
 The coast, he shall at once resistance meet ;
 And if he comes to spy the country out
 He falls into the snare himself prepared.

HAKON.

Will ye, as Olaf's kinsmen, go with Thorer,
 And ratify his words ?

JOSTEIN.

My lord, he is

Our kinsman, but thou, Hakon, art our lord,
Our friend ; the only object of our scheme
Is to test Olaf's innocence.

THORER.

Well said.

HAKON.

(Draws his sword.)

Then swear an oath upon this naked sword,
In Odin's and the great god's sacred grove,
To execute your mission faithfully.

ALL THREE.

We here do swear by Odin, Thor, and Freia.

(*The statue of Odin in the background falls down.*)

JOSTEIN.

Ha ! what was that ?

CARLSHOVED.

God Odin's statue fell.

THORER.

Fell headlong in the sand.

HAKON.

(*Makes an effort to compose himself and goes to the statue.*)

The crumbling stone

Has long been torn by a deep, open rent ;
Come, do you see ? 'Tis dark, but see the break

Is ancient ; but a little fragment held,
 Which might be broken by the faintest wind.
 Now, no more for the present, but to-night
 At table can we further speak of this.
 Let each one go his way and leave me here ;
 We meet again at supper ere ye start.

(*Exeunt THORER, CARLSHOVED, and JO-STEIN.*)

HAKON remains silent a long time looking at the broken statue.

Ha ! no, that is not ancient, that is new !
 Oh ! mighty Odin, wherefore fell thy statue ?
 Is it displeasure, or a warning for me ?
 There liest thou in the sand ;—with blossoms fresh,
 Stands Freia smiling. Should that be a sign
 That the South's tender love shall overcome
 The northern force ? Odin, forsake us not ;
 Assist me to root out thine enemies,
 Who do but hate, and would but mock thy might,
 Who, like the Jotun, most presumptuous,
 Would cast thee down from Hlidskjalf, from thy
 high,
 Thine honoured seat. Oh ! Odin, be not wroth.

(*He kneels down.*)

I promise thee a splendid sacrifice,
 Fourscore and nineteen oxen will I slay,
 Together with my enemies, for thee
 In Medelhuus, if thou but grantest me
 The golden, lovely, dearly purchased crown.

The sacrificial bowls shall reek thy praise ;
With rods deep dipped in gore thy temple shall
Be streaked ; the gate-posts shall be painted red
With lukewarm blood ; myself will plunge my sword
In Olaf's breast. Thy statue shall again
Be raised of firmest marble, and defy
Eternity. (*He gets up.*)

Now closes in the night,
And with its black veil covers all the earth.

*He remains a few moments in silent considera-
tion, and then says)*

I'll go to Bergthor. I will see my crown. (*Exit.*)

**BERGTHOR'S SMITHY.**

Enter BERGTHOR with a crown and a hammer in his hands.

GRIB with a light.

BERGTHOR.

Set down the light and fetch my anvil hither ;
Although the days are long 'tis dark at night,
And I have still a piece of work to do.

GRIB.

How well you understand to use your hands !

BERGTHOR.

If it should give thee pleasure as thou sayest,
Thou'rt welcome to come hither any day

To blow the bellows for me, and to help,
During the time thy master stays at Hlade.

GRIB.

Good sir, I have no other work to do,
And often time hangs heavy on my hands.
To live among the other thralls for me
Is little pleasure. What is there for me
To do? May Thor in Thrudvang bless you, sir,
That you do not despise a simple thrall.
Shall I now blow the bellows?

BERGTHOR.

No, not now;
Let go the bellows, boy; give me my file.

GRIB.

How rapidly your hands move!

BERGTHOR.

Rapidly?
Art thou a judge? Thou shouldest have seen me
work
When I was forging, in my youthful days,
Quærnbider for King Hakon Athelstein.
That was a work! A sword that cut as well
Hard stones as flesh; but on this crown I work
But slowly. 'Twill be finished soon enough.

GRIB.

'Tis almost finished.

BERGTHOR.

Finished, simpleton !

What nonsense dost thou talk ! these jewels must
Be fastened in. (*Enter GUDRUN.*)

What's this ? My child Gudrun
All pale and out of breath ; what does this mean ?

GUDRUN.

Ah ! father dear, Earl Hakon has seen me.

BERGTHOR.

Where ?

GUDRUN.

In the grove.

BERGTHOR.

How often have I said
That I will not allow you to run wild
About the grove to pick up roots and flowers ?
I thank the gracious gods that soon thou wilt
Be married, and then I shall be glad
To have no longer a watch over thee.

(*He hammers at the crown.*)

Hear, boy, believe me I would rather forge
Ten crowns than have to watch two daughters ; far
Too brittle is such ore to work upon.

GUDRUN.

Alas ! my father dear, I am alarmed
Lest he should follow me. And what would Orm
Say then ?

BERGTHOR.

What ! follow thee ! My noble earl,
That plan shall not succeed. I know thee well.
Come, girl, down with thee quickly to the cellar.

GUDRUN.

Alas ! must I again be locked up there ?

BERGTHOR.

May be thou wouldest prefer, then, to be locked
In Hakon's arms ?

GUDRUN.

Oh, heaven ! father dear.

BERGTHOR.

I know him well. There is no man who does
Not live in terror of him for his wife,
His daughter, sister, all his woman-kind.
Come, down into the cellar thou shalt go ;
I cannot rest till I have placed thee safe
There under lock and key. Now, wilt thou come ?
Where is thy sister.

GUDRUN.

Astrid lays the table.

BERGTHOR.

I can do that. Now, keep thy honour safe,
For 'gainst Earl Hakon bolts and bars are vain.
Now, come away. To-morrow I will send
Thee to thy Orm, and her to Thorwald too.

And they must bear the risk themselves for what
May happen to you afterwards.

(*Exeunt BERGTHOR and GUDRUN.*)

GRIB.

(*Looks on the crown lying on the anvil, with silent admiration.*)

And this is what a crown is like. 'Tis thus
That crowns are made ; and now, when it is finished,
Will the Earl Hakon place it on his head
And by the people be elected king !
These things are wonderful, indeed.

(*He takes it up in his hand.*)

How bright it is ; 'tis made of burnished gold,
And heavy ; oh ! how many pounds it weighs.
I well might try it on. (*Puts it on his head.*)

It is too large,

But I can wear it if I let it rest
Upon my neck, thus. Now I wear the crown.
'Tis no such easy thing to wear a crown
As I had thought. It makes my head bow down.

(*He walks up and down the stage.*)

Now I am king ; (*takes up the file*)

And this shall be my sceptre ;
(*sits upon the anvil*)

And this shall be my royal throne, on which
I sit amongst my Norsemen in the Thing.

(EARL HAKON has come in unperceived ; he
remains in the background and watches GRIB
attentively.)

GRIB.

My Norsemen proud, here solemnly I swear
 That I will be a gracious lord to you
 If ye should now elect me as your king.
 But if with violence ye do rebel
 Against what I with justice do demand,
 Shame wait upon you.

(*Perceives HAKON, and is silent with fright.*)

HAKON.

'Tis a splendid sight !

GRIB.

Oh ! be not wroth, my lord.

HAKON.

Thou tremblest, boy,
 Upon the throne. That should a king ne'er do ;
 And should a storm arise around his head,
 And menace him with ruin and with death,
 He still must tranquil keep his lofty seat,
 A bold, a royal, and a worthy sight.
 The storm subsides, the sky is blue again,
 And the sun glitters on his golden crown.

GRIB.

Ah ! you are right. I do full well perceive
 That I to such high honour was not born.

(Enter BERGTHOR with a large key, which he
 puts in his pocket as soon as he sees HAKON.)

HAKON.

Good evening to thee.

BERGTHOR.

All hail, gracious lord.

(Perceives GRIB, who sits still and does not move.)

Ha! Vaulund help me! What does all this mean?

HAKON.

He plays at being king.

BERGTHOR.

(Aside) 'Tis now the fashion.

Off with it. Art thou mad?

HAKON.

I came too soon,

And heard but half his royal promises.

Is he thy workman?

BERGTHOR.

My apprentice he,

And thrall to Thorer Klake.

HAKON.

And to a thrall

Dost thou entrust Earl Hakon's crown?

BERGTHOR.

I could

Not otherwise. I had to leave my work
To lock up both my daughters down below

In the cellar. In the meantime did this knave
Presume to take—

HAKON.

Thy daughters didst thou say ?

BERGTHOR.

My lord, thou lately hast seen one of them,
And she is fearful, so am I myself,
Lest thou shouldst wish to see that sight again.
Now she is under lock and key. To-morrow
Will I a message send to her betrothed,
And when he comes the marriage shall take
place ;
And then he may watch over her himself.

HAKON.

Oh ! father Bergthor, what are these ideas ?
Dost know that thou insultest me ?

BERGTHOR.

Hush, hush !

That is thy tender place, my lord, thou knowest.
Let us no longer play upon this string.
Wilt thou now try the crown on ? I have found
An ancient iron ring, which was dug up
Close to the Offering-house in Medelhuus.
It is an heirloom ; and my grandfather
Upon it fashioned Halfdan Svarte's crown..

Although the ring is rusty it is precious,
For 'tis the measure of the ancient crown.

(HAKON *puts the crown on, it is too big and falls over his eyes.*)

BERGTHOR.

It is too large ; when thou hast got it on
Thy eyes are darkened.

HAKON.

(*Angrily.*)

Baldpate ! did I not

Give thee my measure ; what hast done with
it ?

BERGTHOR.

Thor knows ! I lost it somewhere, and I thought
Thee great enough to wear King Halfdan's crown.

HAKON.

Ha ! Bergthor, Bergthor, thou art old, and thou
Art crafty, skilful, honourable, bold.
I spare thee, but do not abuse my grace.
Fashion the crown again. 'Tis not to fit
An extinct race of kings, but me. I give
Thee still three days, and, Bergthor, woe to thee
If then the crown does not fit Hakon's head.

(*Exit.*)

BERGTHOR.

(*Watches him proudly and angrily.*)

What canst thou do to me ? My hair is white

And I have but a few short hours left,
And thou wouldest rob me of them, and dost think
That therefore I shall tremble at thy wrath ?
No, sooner will I fall upon my sword
Than I again will fashion Norway's crown.
Let him whose head it fits obtain the prize.

(*Exit.*)

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

THE ISLAND OF MOSTER.

A forest with rocks, in the background the sea. OLAF, THANGBRAND and suite come up from the shore, with THORER KLAKE, JOSTEIN and CARLSHOVED.

OLAF.

Well, Thorer, thou hast proved thyself to be
My friend and countryman ; didst sail by night
Hither to meet me, and thou hast done well ;
For hadst thou come an hour later, I should
No longer have been here, for now the wind
Blows favourably from the shore ; it turned
At midnight. But, my Thorer, how didst thou
Learn I was here ?

THORER.

By accident, my lord,
A skipper yesterday did tell it me
At the Earl's table ; thou hast gained all hearts
By hospitality and gentleness.
Thy kindness to me I have not forgot

Earl Hakon the Mighty.

What time my ship had suffered from the storm.
 The night was fine and clear, the wind was fair,
 I were unworthy of thy friendship, lord,
 Had I not hastened here to welcome thee
 Upon our northern shore; as the wind turned
 'Twas not our tacking that I did regret,
 But I was anxious lest, perhaps, the wind,
 That hindered us, might waft thee from the coast.

OLAF.

Earl Hakon, I presume, cannot object
 That I should visit thus my fatherland.
 My own ship came alone within the fjord;
 Meanwhile, the others cruise upon the sea.
 Unreasonably, no doubt, I entertained
 Alarm, and wished to dissipate all doubt.
 But who are these?

THORER.

My lord, thou dost embrace
 Thy own relations, Carlshoved by name,
 And Jostein, both thy cousins-german are
 Upon the mother's side. They wished to come
 With me, their unknown kinsman to salute.

OLAF.

My kinsmen! doubly welcome, doubly dear.

JOSTEIN.

Hail to thee, Ola!

Earl Hakon the Mighty.

OLAF.

Ola! I perceive

Thou art a thorough dalesman by the way

Thou speakest. Ah! my tongue has lost the habit,

I was a little babe when, with my mother,

I had to flee from home and fatherland,

So ye belong to Astrid's family?

CARLSHOVED.

Thy mother Astrid was our aunt, my lord,

Our father was her eldest brother, Halfdan.

JOSTEIN.

My lord, so is it.

OLAF.

We are cousins then,

And ye resemble Astrid, that I see,

Although I early felt my mother's loss.

Thou, Jostein, hast her dimple in thy cheek.

Carlshoved, thou preservest her beauteous locks.

CARLSHOVED.

We do rejoice in these resemblances.

OLAF.

Now tell to me, my good and trusty friends,

What news there is in Norway's ancient land.

I sailed as ye have heard from Erin's Isle

To Russia. Valdemar, my foster-father,

Is dead, and all the country is disturbed.

Ivan, his son, my friend, is Christian minded;

I hasten to assist him with my power,
With deeds and counsels, warriors and priests.
I sailed along without a thought of Norway,
But when I in the distance saw the pines
Upon the cliffs, my bosom heaved, I felt
A wondrous yearning, and it seemed to me
That suddenly I called to mind again
A long-forgotten, wondrous warrior song
From early childhood's days. The tears did burn
Upon my cheeks; the sail, which should have
borne
Us further on, did flap against the mast;
The pennant spread its red wings like a bird,
As eager from the mast to be set free
And flutter to the shore. I felt it was
Impossible for me to pass it by.
Lives there the son who coldly turns his back
Upon his mother when she lovingly
Extends her tender arms to welcome him?
To dissipate all doubt I landed here
On the extreme edge of this little isle,
Where no one lives, where only shepherds' huts
Are seen in solitude among the rocks.
But something I would gladly learn of you
Of ancient Norway ere I start again.
Who knows if e'er again my eyes shall see
My well-loved fatherland; then tell me, Thorer,
How goes it? Good and well?

THORER.

Norway, my lord,
Still firmly stands upon her stony cliffs ;
Those are a strong foundation which cannot
Be easily disturbed.

OLAF.

'Tis true, 'tis true ;
And even will the old white-bearded Odin
With all his agency be powerless
To move your ancient mountains from their seat,
Though he has tried it now full many a year.

THORER.

'Tis true, my lord, the land itself stands firm ;
Luxuriantly the birch trees blend with pines,
While the sun casts its rays upon the hills,
And in the valleys ripens golden corn ;
And still in vain, as hitherto, the sea
Dashes its waves against its marble feet.
Alas ! my lord, while nature blossoms thus
In peaceful and in tranquil quietness,
A strong and mighty poison eats into
The country's vitals, daily more and more.

OLAF.

What meanest thou ? Does not Earl Hakon sit
In peace upon his throne in Throndelag ?

THORER.

A long time has he sat there ; but, my lord,

At last have Norway's peasants found it is
Disgraceful to be governed by an earl.

OLAF.

Why not confer on him the royal title?

THORER.

Can this be asked by one of Halfdan's race?

OLAF.

What matters Halfdan Svarte to the peasants?

THORER,

More than thou think'st. The brave Norwegian men
Have always had a deeply-rooted love
Towards their rightful and their lawful king.

OLAF.

But Hlade's earl for eighteen years has ruled
The kingdom.

THORER.

How with cunning and with force
He did possess himself of all he has,
Thou know'st thyself as well as one of us.
Who can deny Earl Hakon's bravery,
His intellect, and rare sagacity?
Thou know'st how matters in the country stood;
How Gunhild's sons had ravaged all the land,
And lost by sheerest incapacity
The last remains of royal reverence.
Earl Hakon boldly conquered them in fight.

Then came the friendship which he understood
To make with Harald, then the Danish King.
If one would gain an object, he must know
How everything is placed ; that Hakon knew,
And unperceived, like a wily merchant,
The earl got Norway's country in his hands.
Tired of war, the peasants longed for peace,
And thus he peacefully sat on the throne.
What finally established him in power
Was Jomsborg's ruin, when, to Norway's honour,
He beat the might of overweening youth
Which filled the land with terror and despair.

OLAF.

And shall he in the brightness of his fame
Be now despised ?

THORER.

My lord, 'tis natural ;
Hheretofore was he clever, for he knew
That management alone secured his power.
Till now his name was everywhere admired.
Earl Hakon, it was said "he is a hero,
"At Hjorningsvaag did he not vanquish Jomsborg ?
"What can resist him ? What can shake his power ?"
But he in all these praises and renown,
Which turned his head, forgot his wonted sense,
Forgot that in the peasant's love is found
The first and mightiest pillar of the throne.
He grew defiant with his might, and thought

That prudence was no longer necessary.
To each wish of his heart he gave the reins,
To all his passions did he give free scope,
And then he lost all patience, and became
Proud and imperious, nor did respect
The property of individuals,
But violated all the peasants' rights,
Their property, their heirlooms—aye, and worse,
He took their wives and daughters to his home,
And bore them off as victims to his lust.
What more remains to tell ? How unperceived
The flame of mutiny began to rise—
He feared no longer any foreign foe,
And did not mark the foe was in the land,
That cancer deeply gnawed into its heart.
Now does he live in constant skirmishes—
Now this, now that, does fall away from him,
And Norway, anxiously does but await
A bold and lawful king to overthrow
Earl Hakon, and to hurl him from his seat.

OLAF.

Ha ! Thorer, is it truth that thou dost speak ?

THORER.

Here stand thy own relations, let them say,
And ratify my words.

OLAF.

My honest Jostein,
The dimple on thy cheek has disappeared,

'Thou dost not smile ; art thou then not content
That Norway should her fetters cast away ?

JOSTEIN (*confused*).

I am too young to rightly understand
The country's true advantage ; but, my lord,
What Thorer has related is correct.

THORER.

King Olaf ! I need surely not describe
What were my feelings when I heard that thou
Hadst hither come. For then I thought, in truth,
That thou hadst knowledge of the country's state
And seized the opportunity. But now
That thou hast spoken, can I but perceive
In this coincidence a sign from heaven.

OLAF.

Thorger, thou hast thrown doubt into my soul.

THORER.

'Tis as the seed fermenting under ground,
Soon in the springtime to shoot forth and bloom.
Hast thou forgot from whom thou dost descend ?

OLAF.

Say, is it not from Harald the fair-haired ?

THORER.

In line direct thou dost descend from him.

OLAF.

Whose mother, Ragnhild, dreamt about a tree ;

She seemed to wander in a garden, where
She took a blooming twig from off a branch,
And as she held it in her right hand, lo !
It grew, and suddenly became a bough,
One end of which reached down into the earth
And struck deep root, while the green top on high
Rose ever higher, and higher heavenwards,
That scarcely she could reach it with her eye.
The stem was round and mighty in its girth,
And down towards the earth 'twas red as blood,
But upwards it was smooth and summer green
With small white twigs. It grew, till it embraced
The whole of Norway with its mighty arms ;
Was it not so ?

THORER.

My lord, such is the legend.

OLAF.

Was it not also Harald the fair-haired
Who dreamt mysteriously about his locks ;
How some of them in waves did reach the earth,
One pass'd his knees, and one his shoulder-blades,
And some did twist themselves in mighty curls
Around the hero's temples ?

THORER.

Right, my lord.

Then prophesied the wise men in the land
That such betokened a long race of kings,

After his death to govern in the north.

(OLAF stands silent, buried in thought.)

THORER.

What new thoughts are awakened in thy soul ?

OLAF.

What new thoughts ! These are no new thoughts,
my friend.

The dear old thoughts, the dreams of youthful days,
My manhood's purpose.

THORER.

Worthy of thy birth

Thou prov'st thyself. Forgive me, dear my lord,
But wherefore hast thou hitherto concealed
Thy longing and thy right to Norway's throne.

OLAF.

'Twas far beyond my reach, good Thorer ; 'twas
Already occupied, and other thoughts
Did fill my heart. For the soul's holy peace
Is far more precious than all earthly thrones.
As yet my impulse drove me to the south,
To places where the Christian faith was taught.
Still, hitherto has fortune favoured me,
And now another kingdom do I rule.
Here love did bid me lay my sceptre down,
And in the west did love give it me again.
But never in my life, in all my travels,
In all my wanderings, and sojournings
'Mong foreigners, did I forget my birth,

Or that I was a son of Norway's king.
Often the thought has risen in my mind
To grasp my sword, and win my birthright back.
But then I heard that Norway's peasants were
Contented to be governed by Earl Hakon.
What power had I? It needs a mighty host
To force one's way into a foreign land.
And could I not become proud Norway's king,
I had no wish, and no desire to be
A mere disturber of the country's peace.

THORER.

But now the matter wears another face;
Should but the people hear that still there lives
A great great-grandson of the fair-haired Harald,
No power were strong enough to keep them back,
But they will straightway side with thee as soon
As e'er thy ships appear in Throndhjem's fjord.
I need no further words to prove to thee
Thy kinsmen's and my friendship's loyalty.
But one assurance solemnly I give,
That many men of power in the land
Wait but to prove themselves thy friends; indeed,
The object of our journey was that we
Might be the first to bring the joyful news;
And, if thou wilt take counsel of thy friend,
No more adventures shalt thou blindly seek,
But follow where thy fate and fortune point,
'Tis not in vain they beckoned thee to come.

OLAF.

(*After a moment's reflection.*)

Thy tidings have astonished me ; but now
Leave me alone a moment, my good friends ;
There in the shade my men have raised my tent,
Go rest, and seek repose from your fatigues,
I soon will come. My warriors, follow them.

(*Exeunt THORER, CARLSHOVED, and JOSTEIN,
with OLAF's men. OLAF and THANGBRAND
remain.*)

OLAF.

Well, Thangbrand, thou hast listened silently,

THANGBRAND.

And have rejoiced at thy good fortune, lord ;
Over a glorious land shalt thou be king.

OLAF.

But over heathens who but scoff at God.

THANGBRAND.

The greater will thy honour be, my liege,
When thou hast brought them into godly ways.

OLAF.

Yes, Thangbrand, yes, I follow Heaven's sign !
But had I not determined first to go
To Garderike ?

THANGBRAND.

Thou hast promised nought ;
'Twas but a rumour that induced thee, Olaf ;
For wont to deeds, thy rest but wearied thee.

Thou sought'st a work a Christian should perform,
And in thy breast didst feel an innate force
To 'stablish upon earth the power of Heaven.

OLAF.

And think, my Thangbrand, in my fatherland—

THANGBRAND.

As Norway's king, canst thou not better help
Ivan of Garderike, should he need it ?

OLAF.

We first should help our kinsmen and our friends.
To Christianize my country ! Noble thought.

THANGBRAND.

And Garderike's claims should yield to these.

OLAF.

But Thangbrand,—for from thee I nought conceal—
Not pious thoughts alone do fill my breast ;
It swells at the glad prospect that I now
Shall gain my own again, for I was born
To Norway's throne. Can it be sinful, then,
That Olaf longs for the prosperity
That he was born to ?

THANGBRAND.

As God is our Father,
And loves his children, no, my Olaf, no !
To taste in all their freshness life's delights,
If piously enjoyed in innocence,
Is but to see the goodness of the Lord ;

And happy he, who in this life perceives
A reflex of the far-off happiness ;
And happy thou, if as a shepherd thou
Shouldst like a father lead thy Christian flock.

OLAF.

Oh ! leave me, holy father, leave me here,
I need to be alone a little while.

THANGBRAND.

Christ give thee strength, my young and noble hero.
(*Exit.*)

OLAF.

(*Bursts into tears, and throws himself upon his knees with folded hands.*)

My heart dissolves before these mighty thoughts !
Almighty God, am I the instrument
That thou hast chosen to consolidate
Thy glory upon earth ? My Father, thus
In Thy hands do I stand, Thy will be done !

(*Rises from his knees inspired.*)

Yes, yes, I feel it,—yes, I feel it now !
My arm is strong—strength glows within my breast.
Yes, even I, am Thy apostle, Lord,
And with this sword, my Saviour, which is made
In the resemblance of a cross, with this
Will I defy the powers that boldly dare
Mad opposition to Thy majesty.
And as a shepherd in his well-loved north,
Shall Olaf tenderly his flock lead forth.

Where Odin's temples dark and gloomy stood,
 Where streams have flowed of guiltless human blood,
 Shall myrrh and frankincense their perfume shed ;
 His idol shall no priest surround with dead.
 The victim's shrieks, the wild ferocious cries,
 Ne'er more awaits the bloody sacrifice,
 But songs of praise and stringèd harp's soft tone
 Shall gently rise to Heaven's eternal throne.
 In holy piety shall assembled be
 Thy worshippers, the One True Light to see.
 Of need and misery no more complain,
 Nor e'er with impious feasts thy rites profane ;
 Only one silent, holy festival
 Proclaims to all, that in their God live all.
 Murder and hate, and rage and wild hosts flee,
 And love and mercy shall triumphant be.

HLADE.

A passage through a wood. Enter EARL HAKON, armed with sword, shield, and bow. THYRA meets him.

HAKON.

(*Stops confused.*)

Ha ! what do I perceive ? My Thyra, does
 The fine warm weather tempt thee to the woods ?

THYRA.

What tempts thee here ? not Thyra certainly.
 Wouldst visit me ? I see that thou art armed.

HAKON.

For war, my Thyra, and the time is come
For me on board my vessel to embark ;
Against a pirate do I go to sea,
Who ravages the coast.

THYRA.

Ha ! then I must
Thank accident for my good fortune that
I see thee once again before thou dost
Set sail.

HAKON.

With Karker I had left for thee
A message he should give thee.

THYRA.

What ! thy thrall ?

HAKON.

My time was short, myself I could not come.

THYRA.

Oh, Hakon, Hakon !

HAKON.

Torment me not with doubt.

THYRA.

Thou lovest me no more.

HAKON.

And were it so,
Dost think, indeed, that thy reproaches could
Relume the glow in Hakon's breast again,
If it were quenched ?

THYRA.

Canst thou speak thus to me ?

Me, whom thou lovedst more than all the world ?
 Oh, faithless one ! what sweet and flattering words
 Thy tongue disclosed. I was the only one
 Who could make sweet to him great Hakon's life ;
 I was the only one who had the power
 To melt the iron in his warrior breast,
 And wean it to a loyal constancy.
 And I,—poor simpleton !—I trusted thee ;
 I left my house and home, did not regard
 My fame, but followed thee, and gave myself
 To thee. Ha ! I deserve this infamy.

HAKON.

What ! infamy ! My Thyra, 'mongst thy charms
 And excellences, what I prized the most
 Was, that thou wert unprejudiced and just.
 Thou speakest now of my inconstancy,
 And thou thyself art guilty of the same.
 Where hast thou lost thy old free views of life ?
 Thou sayest that thou gav'st thyself to me,
 And that is true, and thou didst make me happy.
 What more canst wish ? Was it a youth like those
 Whose hearts dissolve beneath the pale moonbeams
 That gained thy love ? Didst thou not say thyself,
 Thou lovedst me because I was a man,
 The foremost one of all whom thou hadst seen ?
 What are men's deeds ? Is it a manly deed
 To sigh for ever in the loved one's arms ?

Thou wast a lovely widow ; in thy home,
Idly and wearily thy life was spent.
What didst thou sacrifice ? A well-born dame,
And rich and independent ; shouldst thou choose
Thou canst despise what rumour says of thee.
Two months together have we spent in joy
As sweet as any pair in Freia's hall.
Another object claims the hero's thought.
Audacious peasants venture, here and there,
To murmur, speak aloud, and pirate ships
Infest the land. All that must now be stopped.
The foremost man in Norway has to think
Of all things in due time. The next few weeks
Will scarce afford an hour of leisure left
For love's sweet trifles. Thyra, be thou wise,
Go to thy home, live on thy property
A little while. The absence will increase
The languid flame ; we then shall meet again,
And thou shalt find redoubled Hakon's love.

THYRA.

And thus all then is over, all is done,
And with this vapid, paltry stream of words
Is Thyra's love and faithfulness repaid.
I have deserved it ; yes ! by Asa Loke,
I have deserved thy base inconstancy.
Thou sayest I am clever ; aye, indeed,
Such cleverness I still possess to see
That surely all my words would be in vain.

To bring back e'er again the vanished love
 Into thy cold and cruel, faithless heart.
 But that thou, with such ready impudence
 (Attained by countless infidelities),
 Shouldst, without shame or blush, disclose thyself,
 And without any pity for my pain ;
 'Tis that that kills and crushes me. (*She weeps.*)

HAKON.

By Freia !

I love thee still, my Thyra ; if it were
 My purpose, as thou thinkest, to deceive thee,
 I had not come to carry out my wish
 With that tranquillity thou dost misjudge.

THYRA (*enraged*).

Deceiver, thou dost lie, by Syn, thou liest !
 Thou callest Freia as a witness ! Ha !
 Swear not by Freia. Freia turns away
 Her pure regard from thy distorted form.
 Adulterer ! how could I e'er have loved thee ?
 For I did love thee ; yes, the only one
 Who came to thee, by pure affection moved,
 Was Thyra ;—for what thought I of thy fame ?
 My race is ancient and renowned as thine ;
 Bewildered as I was, I only thought
 Of bringing purity into thy heart
 And truth. Oh, Odin ! when was Loke true ?
 'Tis novelty alone that pleases thee,
 And change alone is what thy heart desires.

Some peasant wench, or doubtless one among
Poor Thyra's handmaids, may have had the charms
To fascinate and captivate thy heart.
But I will be avenged. My brothers, Hakon,
And kinsmen,—better warriors e'en than thou,—
By Asa Odin, they shall vengeance take !

HAKON.

(With forced calmness.)

Thou dost but lose thy breath. Be not so hasty.

(He calls. Enter KARKER.)

If thou hast more to say, behold, there is
My thrall, the rest thou mayest tell to him ;
It is not fitting that Earl Hakon's self
Should hear the scolding of an angry wife. (Exit.)

THYRA.

What wouldst thou, wretched slave ?

KARKER.

Oh ! scold away.

Thou must have heard what now my master said.

THYRA.

(Striking him.)

Impudent thrall !

KARKER.

My lady, spare thyself,

Thou wilt but hurt thy hands upon my back.

THYRA.

(Collecting herself.)

Ha ! Thyra, thou dost lower thyself. Where is
Thy haughtiness and pride ? Leave me, thou thrall.

KARKER.

That, my lord did not order me to do.

THYRA.

What was it that he ordered thee ?

KARKER.

That I

Should tell thee, noble lady, all is ready ;
The carriage waits to drive thee to thy home.

THYRA.

That was the message, then, that thou shouldst
bring,
For which thy lord himself had not the time.
Well, Karker, well, he is our common lord,
And I obey him. Let us straightway go.

(*Exeunt.*)

(Enter EINAR TAMBESKJÆLVER with his bow.
He looks at something behind the scenes.)

EINAR.

Who's he that stands there on the road ? eh ! what ?
It is my master, 'tis the Earl himself,
Who now has landed from his ship again.
Now I will play a trick on him. 'Tis said
That nothing in the world can frighten him.

(*He takes aim and shoots an arrow behind the
scenes.*)

Ha, ha ! I hit the feather in his casque.

HAKON.

(Rushes in anger with drawn sword towards
EINAR, seizes him and says,)

Ha, bribed footpad ! say, say out at once,
How much was promised thee for Hakon's life ?

EINAR (*quietly*).

Nothing, my lord, and I require nothing.
I am no footpad, and I do descend
From noble parents ; thou dost know my race.

HAKON.

Who art thou, villain, and what is thy race ?

EINAR.

My father is called Manhood ; him thou knowest,
Lord Earl ! a crabbed old fellow is he now,
But active in his age ; his beard is thick,
His arm is strong. For ages he has lived
In Norway's mountains.

HAKON.

Manhood ! villain, die !

EINAR.

(Holds his arm back.)

Now, thanks be to the gods who gave me strength
To hold back mighty Hakon's arm, for else
All had been over now.

HAKON.

What sorceress

Or withered witch has lent her magic strength
To thee, to hold this warrior arm ?

EINAR.

Aye, true,
My lord ; my mother she did teach me that.
She is a witch, as thou hast rightly thought,
But, oh ! she is not withered ; she is red
And white, like blood and milk. Her name is
Health,
And is, like thee, of ancient northern race.

HAKON.

Now thou shalt die !

EINAR.

It is too soon, my lord !
For I am little more than twenty years,
And thou thyself wouldest be the loser, Earl,
If thou shouldst kill the best of Norway's youth.

HAKON.

Thou villain ! didst thou not attempt my life ?

EINAR.

By Odin and by Norway's Freia,—no !
I only shot the feather in thy casque
And nothing more.

HAKON.

And for a mark dost thou
Select Earl Hakon's head to practise at ?

EINAR.

His plume, my lord—his plume alone. It did
Amuse me to alarm Earl Hakon once ;

'Tis said 'tis difficult to frighten thee,
I therefore shot the feather in thy casque.
That wound can soon be healed ; it only costs
The feathers of a cock's tail at the most.
Now if between thy fingers thou wilt hold
A silver penny, and I do not shoot
It through, and do no damage to thy hand,
Then call me rascal, or what name thou wilt,
And hang me up upon the nearest tree.

HAKON.

Boy, I believe thee, such eyes cannot lie.
Behold ! above us is the green birch tree ;
There is a small dark spot upon the bark,
Now shoot, and if the arrow passes through
The spot, and sticks firm in it, then will I
Believe thy story.

EINAR.

(*Takes aim and shoots.*)
So, now thou believest.

HAKON.

Thou art a famous shot, and thou shalt be
Always with me. 'Tis well I met thee here.
A rumour fills the country of a youth
Who far excels all other archers here,
And to my castle I have summoned him,
And when he comes, we then will let him see
That we at Hlade have our archers too.

EINAR.

Let him but come, and let me shoot with him.
What is his name ?

HAKON.

One Einar Tambeskjælver.

EINAR.

That is my name too. Let him come;
I see that I shall be a match for him
In everything, not only in my name.

HAKON.

What ! art thou Einar Tambeskjælver ?

EINAR.

Aye,
One of them ; let the other straightway come,
And we will struggle for the foremost place.

HAKON.

Ha, rash, exuberant, and impetuous youth !
So thou wast on thy way to Hakon's court.

(He takes him under the chin.)

How young and strong and bold,—how arrogant !
Such are the youths I wish to see with me;
Say, wouldst thou like to be Earl Hakon's man ?

EINAR.

If I can serve thee one way or another
I'll do so willingly, with all my heart ;
But here, in Norway, all is quiet now,
As in an old crone's corner by the fire.

HAKON.

Not all so quiet as thou seem'st to think.
I want strong, faithful, and courageous men,
And e'en to-day I go on board my ships,
To keep and guard the country's southward coast
Against a foreign, perhaps a dangerous foe.
Wilt thou bend thy bow and go with me now,
In my defence, and for thy own renown ?

EINAR.

Aye, my lord, willingly. So help me Thor !
But what a splendid bow that is of thine,
Inlaid with gold and silver. Mine, thou seest,
Is made of fir-roots, with bear sinews strong.

HAKON.

(Takes his bow from his shoulder and gives it
to him.)

Do, Einar, take my bow, and keep it as
A pledge of Hakon's friendship.

EINAR.

(Tries the string of the bow.)

Ah, too weak !
The Earl's bow is too weak. Take it again.
It is too heavy, it is far too weak ;
My own here is far better.

HAKON.

Ha, proud youth !
Dost thou despise the gifts Earl Hakon makes ?
What ?

EINAR.

Earl Hakon has a treasure which, indeed,
Einar would not despise should it be offered.

HAKON.

And what is that ?

EINAR.

Thou hast a daughter, Earl, .
A rose upon a lily's stem were not
More charming. We can speak of this again.

HAKON.

And so thou thinkest—

EINAR.

To win Berglioth.

HAKON.

Thou aimest at a high and distant mark.

EINAR.

As ever should a valiant archer aim.
My arrows carry far, as thou dost know,
But looks of tender eyes have also darts.

HAKON.

Is, then, the shooter shot ?

EINAR.

He'll tell thee that
When he has slain a host of enemies.
Now to the shore, my lord.

HAKON.

Already ready ?

EINAR.

(*Touching his knapsack.*)

I have my household goods upon my back,
Down to the shore, my lord, and quick.

HAKON.

Brave youth !

I like thee, boy, as if thou wert a maid.

EINAR.

That is the last thing I should wish to be.



A peasant's room. ORM and his bride GUDRUN are sitting at the head of the table, BERGTHOR beside them. On the other side ASTRID and her betrothed, THORWALD. Several peasants.

BERGTHOR.

Be merry, children, let the horn go round ;
Spare not the mead, for it is old and good,
The day that I was married with Gunlöde
I laid myself the barrel in the cellar,
And swore an oath that it should not be broached
Before my elder daughter's marriage-day ;
And what I swore you see that I have kept.
I can enjoy myself in my old age.
Is not the maiden handsome, my good Orm ?
I well remember when I saw her first
I felt enraged and almost cursed at her ;

I scolded poor Gunlöde in her bed.
 And said, " Why, woman, what bad trick is this ?
 What do I want with daughters ? Give me sons
 Whom I may teach to carry spear and shield ! "
 And then I flung the little missy down
 Into the cradle.

ORM.

But in time, good Bergthor,
 You got to love the child.

BERGTHOR.

As she grew up,
 I know not how it was, she used to crawl
 Upon me, fussed about ; and when the girls
 Are about fifteen years of age, or so,
 One must be fond of them, e'en if one will,
 Or will not. One is forced to do it.

ORM.

See

How happy the old man this evening is.
 Come, Thorwald, let the horn go round again ;
 There is but little drunk this evening.

THORWALD.

But little drunk, my lad, what wouldest thou, then ?
 I feel as if I were King Fjölner, who
 Was drowned in a meal vat.

BERGTHOR.

Children, hush !

What is that noise without ?

THORWALD.

It surely is
More friends to celebrate the wedding day.

(*He goes to the door ; enter STEIN with a body
of armed thralls.*)

What would ye, children ? where do ye come ?

STEIN.

We are Earl Hakon's thralls, and we are sent
To tell our master's bidding.

ORM.

Has the Earl
Had news that we were all assembled here,
And takes advantage of our meeting thus ?
So speak, we are prepared to hear thy words.

STEIN.

That you were in such numbers come together,
The Earl did not suspect, although he knew
That here was held thy marriage-feast.

ORM.

What is thy errand ? Speak it out at once.

STEIN.

Well, short and good. The Earl has sent us here
To greet thee with all friendship. Orm Lyrgia,
He knows thee, and he knows thou art a man
Who to thy lord art faithful and obedient.
Our Earl has lately seen thy beauteous bride,

And she has kindled love's flame in his breast.
 'Gainst such attractions does he strive in vain ;
 The thought that now a subject shall possess
 What he himself does pine for, is to him
 Intolerable, and therefore he does hope
 That thou wilt yield thy bride to him.

BERGTHOR.

What now !

ORM.

And darest thou, depraved thrall, to bring
 Such words to me ? and does the Earl himself
 Make such demands of Norsemen, proud and free ?

STEIN.

Orm, we had hoped to find thee here alone,
 With but a few companions as thy friends.
 The Earl expressly has commanded us
 That we should convey Gudrun to his court,
 And watch her safely till he comes again.
 And as regards a judgment of his deeds,
 Surely no one of us presumes so far ;
 He stands too high for us to censure him.

(General uproar.)

BERGTHOR.

This is too much ;—away, away with you,
 Depravèd thralls !

THORWALD.

(Seizes the drinking-horn.)

Go, greet your Earl from me,
 And tell him Thorwald drank to his defeat.

SEVERAL VOICES.

Away with Hakon's thralls !

STEIN.

(*To the other thralls.*)

Stand to your arms.

THORWALD.

Ye venture then to try your feebleness ?

ALL THE PEASANTS.

Strike them down dead.

THORWALD.

I lately forged myself

A hammer of the strongest iron wrought,
And where it strikes, four thralls shall straightway
fall.

STEIN.

Strike, my men, strike !

PEASANTS.

Cut down the viper's race.

(*They fight; after some resistance HAKON'S
thralls take to flight. The men pursue them.
GUDRUN, who has fainted, is surrounded by
the women, who attempt to bring her to life
again.*)

ASTRID.

My sister, well-loved Gudrun, come to life !

They are all beaten—there is not one left ;
See through the window how they fly away.

(Re-enter the men. ORM, who perceives the state in which his bride is, throws himself at her feet.)

ORM.

Bring back my bride to life ! Why stand ye here
And whimper, women ? Where is now your art ?
Bring back my bride to life !

THORWALD.

Now by the great
Odin on Hlidskjalf, who contemplates all,
Here do I raise on high my blood-stained sword,
Besmeared with blood of thralls, with blood that
flowed
From Hakon's friends, and here I do defy him ;
By Odin, Vil, and Vee, by all the gods !
I ne'er will rest till I mix his blood
With that which flowed from them, and thus
revenge
The insult offered to my brother here.

BERGTHOR.

And I, though I am old and stiff and wrinkled,
Upon the red nose of the hammer swear
That I, for this disgrace, will vengeance take.
He wanted me to hammer him a crown ;
Ha, we will hammer him ! I am the oldest
Among you all, and father to the bride ;
Look at her, lying there, poor guiltless maid,
A faded flower in her lover's arms.

Assemble round me now, ye peasant men,
And swear upon this mighty, heavy hammer,
Hakon's and Evil's fall.

ORM.

Gudrun, my love !
Dost ope thine eyes again ?

ALL THE PEASANTS.

(Laying their hands on the hammer.)

Earl Hakon dies !

END OF SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

THE ISLAND OF MOSTER.

CARLSHOVED. JOSTEIN. GRIB.

GRIB.

Yes, what I tell you now, good lords, is true.
 Earl Hakon here on Moster came on shore,
 Under the hill; his ships lie in the Fjord
 Upon the other side, behind the wood.

CARLSHOVED.

And did he not meet Olaf as he sailed
 To bring his ships within the port? 'Tis strange!
 For every moment now we may expect
 The King's return.

GRIB.

Earl Hakon's wiliness
 And the dark night were favourable to him.

JOSTEIN.

And thus the northern lord is well prepared
 To greet King Olaf boldly should he try

To come on shore. A large and worthy scene
For such a deed.

GRIB.

Aye, a meeting is
Prepared for Olaf; but the battle which
Is chosen needs no island such as this,
An open battle field could not be used;
It rather needs a dark and gloomy wood,
Just such a one as lies on either side.

CARLSHOVED.

Explain thyself, and clearly; what dost mean?

GRIB.

A holy interference of the gods
Has turned to truth the lie my master told.
But, naturally, now this truth has wrought
A change in his, and in Earl Hakon's plan.

JOSTEIN.

Presumptuous thrall! How darest thou speak
Such words as these?

GRIB.

The same bold speech, I hope
Ye both will hold as soon as ye have learnt
Its full connection.

CARLSHOVED.

Do not speak in riddles.

GRIB.

So know, then, that Earl Hakon scarcely had

Set out from Hlade e'er a hasty boat
O'ertook him as he slowly cruised around
The islands, and it brought the news to him
That insurrection had broke out among
The Throndhjem peasants for a maid whom he,
According to his wont, had sent to fetch ;
And by the force with which the rage burst forth
One well could see the spark had smouldered long.
What was then left to do ? Ye know the Earl
Determines quickly, and considering
A little while, he thought it of more weight
To fight against a mighty king as foe
Than 'gainst a herd of peasants, and he thought
His battles would increase his warrior fame
And terrify the peasants ; but when he
Came out upon the deep and sent his spies
Before him, then he, to his sorrow, learnt
That Olaf's fleet was far more numerous
Than rumour had announced to him at Hlade.
What was then left to do ? He sailed for Moster,
And here he found my master, his right hand.
'Tis known the Earl has never yet despaired ;
If one course fails, another must be tried.
My noble lord then made a plan which was
Accepted. "Need compels me to it. 'Tis
The will of the high gods," such were his words.
But for his own sake also surely he
Would wish he might be rid of his new guest.
The Earl were badly off should it be known

How matters stood—that Trygveson was here.
The old affection towards the royal house
And hate against the Earl, the two combined
Would make the danger far more dangerous.
What happened? He was silent, told his men
To pitch his tents at once: they hardly know
How matters stand, for he has made them think
It is a pirate they are cruising for.

JOSTEIN.

What is his purpose now?

GRIB.

How often I

In many a sleepless night, with weeping,
Have asked the high gods from my bed of straw
Why they decreed to place my active life
In the degraded station of a thrall?
Thanks be to them, allwise and mighty gods!
For otherwise my master's plan had been
Disclosed too late, and, otherwise, too soon
Had Olaf swum in his young, noble blood.

JOSTEIN.

Stretch not our expectations further—speak.

GRIB.

I overheard all. I was present there.
I am his thrall—a poor and common thrall,
And unperceived I follow, as the train,
The purple robe, and nought is hid from him.

But to be brief. Here, in this very wood,
 Shall Olaf be enticed by Thorer Klake,
 Greeted with show of friendship, and then murdered ;
 Earl Hakon in a peasant's hut awaits
 Till Thorer brings to him the pallid head.
 Then will he go to the mainland. Rogoland
 Is true and loyal ; he'll collect his men
 To scatter all the Erse who may attempt
 To call for vengeance for their own king's death.

JOSTEIN.

Didst thou hear that ?

GRIB.

Yes, by the holy Baldur,
 As surely as my heart is innocent.

JOSTEIN.

And 'tis for this we should have lent our hands !

CARLSHOVED.

And we have given him help to such a deed !

JOSTEIN.

Oh ! Grib, I am ashamed. I blush for shame.

GRIB.

There is no need for that, my noble lord,
 For if a man once really feels ashamed,
 It is no longer necessary for him
 To be ashamed. But who would e'er suspect
 So great a hero of so foul a deed ?

Earl Hakon has a pair of lion's eyes,
Which with their glance alone commands. He
looked,
And ye obeyed. How great it was to be
Earl Hakon's warriors, and to feel convinced
That ye had helped the hero to his throne ;
That was your motive.

JOSTEIN.

He shall be dethroned.

CARLSHOVED.

As true as Olaf is a noble hero
And Astrid's son, Hakon shall be dethroned.

GRIB.

Your hearts are rightly placed, my lords, I see.
But hush ! The ships do now approach the shore ;
Now the King lands ; behold the little barks !
What must be done must now be quickly done.
As soon as ye see Olaf tell him all.
My master is with Hakon in the wood ;
If Olaf hastens with his warriors, he,
With ease, can capture both of them at once.
Maybe something already has been done.
But hush ! Ye now can hear the lovely sounds
Come from the ship. Ye hear the holy songs ;
How lovely they do sound across the water.
Farewell, I now must hasten to my lord
There in the wood. Forget not what ye swore.

JOSTEIN.

No, surely not.

CARLSHOVED.

The ship has stopped, behold !
 The King is disembarking with his men
 And with the monks. Behold, they hand to him
 The crimson banner with the milk white cross.

JOSTEIN.

The red betokens valiant hero's courage,
 The white the peace of Christianity.
 They do approach ; come, let us step aside.

(Enter OLAF with a large banner in his hand,
 followed by his men and the monks. The
 latter sing as follows.)

Cæli Deus sanctissime
 Qui lucidas mundi plagas
 Candore pingis igneo
 Augens decoro lumine.

Infunde nunc piissime !
 Donum perennis gratiæ
 Fraudis novæ ne casibus
 Nos error alterat vetus.

Expelle noctem cordium !
 Absterge sordes mentium
 Resolve culpæ vinculum
 Everte moles criminum.

O tu sole serenor
Et balsamo suavior
Veni, veni rex optime
Pater immensæ gloriæ.

OLAF.

(*Raises the banner on high and plants it firmly in the ground.*)

I here do plant the Christian banner deep
In Norway's soil, and through the mountain's stone
It, like a tree, shall strongly strike its roots.
And it shall blossom, aye, and bring forth fruit ;
Yes sevenfold, refreshing, living fruit.
With tears of longing and repentance shall
Its roots be watered ; and with pious sighs,
Surrounded as with billows of warm winds,
The sap shall ripen in the swelling buds.
Like songs of birds the congregation's voice
Shall quiver to heaven through the mighty vault.
And, like an old oak of a hundred years,
The tree shall spread its mighty branches wide
Over the fatherland ; and in its shade
Shall friendship, love, and piety reside,
And from the parent stem with holy looks
Devoutly gaze towards the setting sun.
And in the pure and consecrated bark
Shall Norway's monarchs proudly carve their names
And all around the flowers of innocence
Shall keep their watch like little angels bright,

And thrust aside the spectres of the dark.
Appalled from the tree of Christendom
Shall Odin, with his solitary eye,
Fly forth to deserts, to the naked hills,
And make a last and impotent attempt
To conquer once again his vanquished power,
And there like a wounded wolf shall howl.
But the tree's leaves shall, like to angel's wings,
The howling of the goblins waft away,
That they may not dismay our pious sons
Who 'neath the foliage confidently sleep.

CHORUS.

Amen.

OLAF.

Thanks that ye piously confirm my words ;
Ye holy brethren, thanks. Do ye remember
The ship but lately past the isle of Stord ?
There Hakon Athalstein, my ancestor,
Lived, and was from a banquet called away
To battle, where he died a hero's death.
Oh ! Hakon, noble Hakon ! pious Hakon !
Athalstein's chief, my kinsman pure and good,
Thou fadest as an early blossom nipped
By a night's frost. Alas ! thy pious roots
Had not the strength to force themselves into
The cold and stubborn mountains of the north,
But it was thou who first did sow the seed ;
May thou in heaven be for ever blessed !

For surely thou art there, although thou wast
Too weak to combat error. They compelled thee
To eat of horse's liver ; forced thy lips,
That would have pressed the holy cup, to touch
Their sacrificial bowl's accursed rim.
The time had not come, Oh, noble Hakon !
But now from Heaven dost thou on Olaf smile,
Who boldly follows in thy holy steps.

CHORUS.

Amen !

OLAF.

Thanks, brethren, thanks ! and now return again.
Rest, and refresh yourselves from your fatigues ;
For, lo ! the boatmen now have pitched the tents,
And we with song the land have consecrated.
Go, holy brethren, go with Heaven's peace.

(*Exit CHORUS. OLAF remains with his warriors.*)

(*To CARLSHOVED and JOSTEIN, who now approach.*)

Now, my dear kinsmen, well-beloved brethren !
Will ye, like honest friends, stand by my side ?

JOSTEIN.

My King !

CARLSHOVED.

King Olaf !

OLAF.

Well, what does this mean ?

JOSTEIN.

Strike off our heads !

CARLSHOVED.

Aye, strike them off, my liege !

OLAF.

What means this wonderful proceeding, say ?

JOSTEIN.

We have betrayed thee,

CARLSHOVED.

Wickedly betrayed thee.

OLAF.

Impossible ! Ye have betrayed me, how ?

Was all invention ? Have ye brought me here
To fall in the Earl's snare ?

CARLSHOVED.

Fear not, my lord !

OLAF.

I have no fear of Hell, and even less
Of Hakon. Come, stand up. Why do ye kneel ?
Fall on your knees to God, if ye have sinned,
And tremble at the arm of righteousness.

CARLSHOVED.

My noble lord, to thee did Thorer lie,
But all that he did tell to thee is true.

JOSTEIN.

For Hakon's tyranny has lately turned
To truth the lies that he invented for thee.

OLAF.

The land is then in uproar?

CARLSHOVED.

Aye, my lord!

OLAF.

And Hakon?

JOSTEIN.

Here!

OLAF.

Here?

CARLSHOVED.

With but a few ships,
Which nought avail against thy fleet, my lord.

OLAF.

What is his wish?

JOSTEIN.

By cunning to effect

What he had hoped to do before the world.

Thorer is but a traitor to entice

Thee to the wood, and there among the trees,
Give thee thy death blow.

OLAF.

What! is Hakon here?

Here in the wood? Should Thorer come alone?

What is the Earl's force?

JOSTEIN.

Not so great as thine.

All in the greatest silence shall take place,

For Hakon now is almost more afraid
Of his own men, king Olaf, than of thine.
The Norsemen must not learn that thou art here,
For that would open all their wounds afresh.
Hakon is in a peasant's hut alone,
And in the wood wilt thou find Thorer Klake ;
And that thou may'st make sure of the result,
Let all thy warriors closely follow thee ;
Thy force does more than equal Hakon's force.

OLAF.

How can I comprehend this strange affair ?
And what assurance have I that ye now
Speak truth to me ; ye that so lately have
Confessed to treachery so base as this ?

JOSTEIN.

Our own confession does most fully prove
That we will have no part in such a crime.
Earl Hakon wished to meet thee in the field ;
He bade us follow Thorer, that we might
Retain thee here, until himself should come.
To seek a strife is custom in the north.
He was our lord, and with his craft and cunning,
'Twas easy for him to deceive our youth ;
Thou wast our kinsman, but we only knew
That thou didst jeopardise Earl Hakon's peace.
We went ; but in the meantime matters changed,
And with them changed the purpose of the Earl.
By silence we had easily betrayed thee ;

Our lies to thee, our confidence in Thorer,
Deserve a punishment. My head I offer,
That thou canst take, but oh! misjudge me not.

OLAF.

And what should I do with thy head, rash youth?
Keep it thyself, thou dost require it;
'Twere little good to me.

CARLSHOVED.

Oh, noble Olaf!

JOSTEIN.

Then trust me on my word, and follow us,
If not embark again upon thy ships.
But see where Thorer skulks among the trees,
With Grib, his thrall.

OLAF.

And yonder, I perceive,
More of my warriors; they come to land.
I will instruct them straightway that they shall
Surround the island. In a little while
Hakon with all his brood shall captured be.

(To his men.)

Follow, with drawn swords, closely through the
wood,
And hold yourselves in readiness to strike.

(*Exeunt.*)

*Enter THORER KLAKE and GRIB hurriedly
from the opposite side. THORER has a
basket and a dagger in his hand.)*

THORER.

There goes he, with his warriors does he go
 To seek repose in Norway's summer grass.
 Ha, Olaf! do not hurry, for to thee
 The long repose shall come ere thou expect it.
 Now, Grib, hast understood what I have said?

GRIB.

Each word, my noble lord; alas, too well!

THORER.

To rush upon him, and to plunge the dagger
 Deep in his heart, as at my side he sits.

GRIB.

Aye, my good lord.

THORER.

As soon as he is dead,
 Then shalt thou cut his head off, place it in
 The basket I have here, and follow me
 Down to the hut where Hakon waits for us.
 He'll give thee straight thy freedom, and will gird
 A sword about thy loins.

GRIB.

'Tis well, my lord.

THORER.

Consider then the honour thou'l't enjoy,
 And think 'tis Olaf thou wilt have destroyed;
 Him who would root out Odin's ancient truth,—
 Him shalt thou kill. In future centuries

Thy name will in the chronicles be found,
And men will say, 'Twas Grib who did this deed.

GRIB.

I have an earnest longing, my brave lord,
And many a time I wished to do a deed
To raise me up above a thrall's estate.

THORER.

I know it, and thou hast it now, my Grib.
Look ! dost thou see this fine and polished dagger
That, like moonlight on the waters, gleams ?
And dost thou see the point, how sharp it is ?

GRIB.

A splendid knife !

THORER.

Aye, but that is not all,—
Thou seest but half of its advantages ;
For mark this little channel in the steel
That runs down to the point.

GRIB.

Aye, my good lord.

THORER.

So little as it is, it is, however,
The way to Helheim, Grib.

(*Looks round.*)

Is no one here ?

GRIB.

No one at all, 'Twas but a hungry raven
That screeched upon the rock.

THORER.

It screeches for
Its prey, Grib; for this channel, as thou seest,
Which runs down from the hilt,—dost see? the hilt
Is hollow, and this spring—dost understand?

GRIB.

No, lord.

Ah, true! such lovely things,
Such cunning workmanship, are little known
Here in the clumsy North. In travelling
In Velksland did I buy this precious dagger;
I thought, and now the thought has turned to truth,
Who knows what use it may be of?

GRIB.

’Tis true.

THORER.

And now, my Grib, hast not thou often seen
A wounded warrior, who, with all his wounds,
Has quite recovered, and got whole again?

GRIB.

Yes, often, lord.

THORER.

If then a single stroke
Is to be sure and certain, thou canst see
How little one can trust to strength of arm.

GRIB.

I know not, if the arm is only strong.

THORER.

How ! strong ? what is there in all human strength ?
But in this dagger, see, the hilt is filled
With a most powerful rare juice, which flows
Into the wound, and mixes with the blood,
And clots it.

GRIB.

Ha ! now first I understand ;
Poison !

THORER.

Speak not so loud. There is the dagger.
Be prudent with it, carry it with care ;
Thou art not used such weapons to employ.

GRIB.

(Balances the dagger in his hand.)
My lord, I have a strong desire ; canst thou guess ?

THORER.

No, Grib. Thy eyes flash fire ; what dost thou
want ?

GRIB.

To plunge the dagger deep in thine own breast.

THORER.

Grib ! art thou mad ?

GRIB.

Stand still, my lord, I say.
Canst thou not understand it was a jest ?

THORER.

But such a jest !

GRIB.

Thou thinkest that for a jest
It was too coarse ?

THORER.

Yes, Grib, it was too coarse,
And this is not the time to make a jest.

GRIB.

So then, I will go seriously to work.
Again thou screechest, raven ! take thy prey !

(*Stabs him.*)

THORER (*falls*).

Perfidious villain ! thou hast pierced my heart.

GRIB.

That is not true. What callest thou thy heart ?
Thou canst give such honourable name
To the cold lump of flesh in thy left side
That ne'er had feeling ! How, then, could it feel
That thrust ? No, Thorer, 'tis impossible.

THORER.

Thou traitor !

GRIB.

'Tis thyself that thou hast named.

THORER.

Ha, that is true ! (Dies.)

GRIB.

Thou shouldst have thought of that
A little earlier ; now it is too late. (Looks at him.)
There lies he, swimming in his own heart's blood !

Where are thy plots,—where is thy cunning now?
Canst thou not discover a device
To stop the blood's flow? Like a simpleton
With nose turned up in th' air, thou liest there,
And now the subtlety of all thy life
Can place no hindrance in thy way to Nastroud.

(Enter OLAF, CARLSHOVED, JOSTEIN, and
followers.)

OLAF.

(To GRIB, raising his sword.

Where is thy master, thrall?

GRIB.

(Pointing to the body.)

See, there he lies!

OLAF.

What, Thorer Klake, lying in his blood!

GRIB.

He sails along down Elivaga's stream
To Hilmheim.

OLAF.

Who has killed him?

GRIB.

Mighty king!

He, with his villain's work has killed himself.

OLAF.

Explain!

GRIB.

He had attempted to persuade me
To plunge this dagger in thy breast, my lord.

Thor knows wherefore ; he probably himself
 Had felt an inward horror if he had
 Stained his own hands with blood.

OLAF.

What followed then ?

GRIB.

I got the dagger with the poison in it.
 I should have plunged it into Trygveson,
 But I mistook, and plunged it into Thorer.
 There lies he cold and stiff upon the ground,
 And speaks no word. His tongue ran formerly,
 And with his little, fawning, bloodshot eye,
 Continually he glanced to right and left.
 It never was at rest, but now 'tis quiet,
 And dull, and drowsy, as though seen through horn.
 Ah ! lord, you cannot think how rapidly
 My master changed his nature all at once.

OLAF.

Thou honest thrall !

GRIB.

If Thorer could but speak
 'Tis he himself should ratify my words.
 He swore I should become Earl Hakon's man,
 And gain my freedom, carry spear and shield,
 And drink the mead in the high warrior's hall,
 If I my task accomplished ; but, my lord,
 It seemed to me it would be far too dear
 To buy Earl Hakon's mead with Olaf's blood.

OLAF.

Ha ! valiant youth. Come, tell me, wouldest thou choose

To be a man of Olaf's, faithfully
To fight for him as for thy lawful king,
And seat thyself in token of his friendship
Amongst his foremost warriors ?

GRIB.

(*With tears in his eyes.*)

Ah ! lord, king,
Thou with thy goodness now dost melt my pride.
Such things are offered me ! Is the time come
When I at last shall burst my thraldom's bonds ?
Ah ! I could whimper like a child. Forgive me.

OLAF.

Thy freedom had been promised by the Earl.

GRIB.

But what a freedom ! What is freedom, lord ?
I should have bought the body's freedom with
That of the soul—have lost the name of thrall,
By proving that I was indeed a thrall.

OLAF.

Thou Christian heathen. Come, give me thy hand.
What is thy name ?

GRIB.

Grib was I called as thrall.

OLAF.

Henceforth be Grif thy name, and on thy shield
Emblaze in colours bright a griffin strong,
Which strikes a venomous serpent down to earth.

GRIF.

Ha ! I do understand. That venomous serpent
Is Thorer Klake. By Odin, that is splendid.
My lord, 'tis as a king thou dost reward.

OLAF.

Call not on Odin, for his power is vain,
Thou seest his spirit in his worshippers.
Where now is Hakon ?

GRIF.

In the wood, my lord,
Hid with his thrall, within a peasant's hut.
'Tis there he waits for Thorer with thy head.
But I will cut off Thorer's head, my lord,
So shalt thou bring Earl Hakon Thorer's head,
Instead of thine being thither brought by him.

OLAF.

No, Grif, no. Dead is dead. Away, my men,
And bury over there the lifeless corpse.

GRIF.

Beneath the nettles in the ditch.

OLAF.

Not so.

Beneath this elder tree, that it may strew

Its white and mournful blossoms down upon
The grave. Oh! Grif, thou must not malice bear,
Thou must not hate the dead.

GRIF.

If thou, my lord,
Wilt only teach me what I ought to do,
Thou soon shalt see that I shall better be.

OLAF.

Now follow me in silence to the Earl.

GRIF.

This is the path that we must take, my lord.

Exeunt.

A PEASANT'S ROOM.

EARL HAKON. KARKER.

HAKON.

Well, hast thou done all I commanded thee?

KARKER.

Aye, my lord Earl. I told them on the ship
That thou hadst disembarked, and come to shore
To take the cool fresh air among the trees,
Because it is too hot upon the sea,
Now in the mid-day hours, which is caused
From the sunbeams shining on the water
With force, and from the water up again.

And then 'tis bad, because upon the sea
 There always are two suns, that is to say,
 One in the sky, another on the sea ;
 But upon shore one's plagued by only one,
 And therefore 'tis that thou hast come to shore.

HAKON.

And that 'tis here I wish to make my meal.
 Didst thou say also that ?

KARKER.

My noble Earl,
 Indeed I did ; for when did I forget
 My meal, or what has reference to a meal ?
 Eating's by far the best thing in the world,
 Although 'tis true, upon the other hand,
 It may be said with truth that drinking has
 Its great advantages. Yes, without doubt,
 I said the Earl will make his breakfast there.
 Upon the sea the ship shakes up and down,
 And then the food goes down the wrong way. Ah !
 What good is that ?

HAKON.

Quite right, my Karker, right,
 Thou art a clever fellow. Go and help
 Kisping to cook. I wish to be alone.
 If Thorer comes, or even Thorer's thrall,
 Let them come freely in to me at once.

KARKER.

Good, my lord Earl, all that shall be performed.

(*Exit.*)

HAKON.

Would that I had many more the like of him,
I then should feel secure where'er I went.
A dog is not so faithful or so strong,
And then he has the advantage, he can speak.
Invaluable as instrument or weapon,
I would not change him 'gainst the sharpest sword.

(*He sits down.*)

The others with their sharp eyes, those who have
Such clever tongues, cannot be trusted so.
Yet Thorer has,—ha ! Thorer, hast thou greeted
Olaf, and sent him flying to his gods ?
There in the skies ?

(*He leans his head on his hand and murmurs.*)

It was not my decision,
It came from Thorer. He must answer for
His deeds to Odin. Odin will not be wroth.
What ? Should not that insanity be stopped
That threatens to cast down the mighty gods
From off their ancient seats ? For Olaf would
Not only seize upon my royal power,
But more than that, Valfandurs, let him fall !
For now at once, and rapidly, the change
Must be accomplished, if all should go well ;
The time has fully come to quell the storm,
The time has fully come, the time has fully come !

My hair is getting grey, but, ye white locks,
 Ye soon shall golden be,—grant only time.
 The mocking maidens used to laugh at me
 Because my hair was black instead of gold.
 Be patient, children, golden it shall be ;
 It shall be gilded by the golden crown.
 Who comes there? Ha! 'tis doubtless Thorer Klake,
 He promised he would bring me Olaf's head,
 And now my eyes refuse to look on it.

(He remains sitting in the same position.)

(Enter OLAF TRYGVESON muffled up in a grey
 cloak with a broad hat on his head.

HAKON.

(Without looking up.)

My valiant Thorer Klake, hast come at last ?
 Hast been successful ? Dost thou bring to me
 What thou didst promise ? Answer, Thorer Klake.

OLAF.

All things have happened as they should, my lord ;
 But pardon Thorer that he does not come
 And bring himself King Olaf's head to thee,
 'Twas difficult for him. Thor knows he had
 A sort of loathing that himself should bring it,
 And so he sent me.

HAKON.

Well, 'tis good ; away,
 And deeply bury it in the dark earth.
 I will not look on it myself—my eye

Bears not such sights—they reappear in dreams.
Bury the body with it. Tell thy lord
That he shall come at once.

OLAF.

He is asleep.

HAKON.

Asleep?

OLAF.

A mid-day slumber ; he lies stretched
Stiffly beneath a shadowy elder tree.

HAKON.

Then wake him up. (*Aside.*) Asleep, and after such
A deed ;—Ha ! Thorer, I admire thee,
Thou hast rare courage. (*Aloud.*) Thrall, go wake
him up.

OLAF.

But wilt thou first not look at Olaf's head ?

HAKON.

No; I have said, no.

OLAF.

Thou dost think, my lord,
That, perhaps, it is a horrid frightful sight ;
It is not so, my lord, for Olaf's head
Looks fresh and sound as any in the land.

HAKON.

Away, I tell thee !

OLAF.

I ne'er saw the like;
 I always heard that Hakon was a hero,
 Few like him in the North, and does he fear
 To see a lifeless, and a corpseless head?
 How wouldst thou tremble then, my lord, if thou
 Shouldst see it on his body?

HAKON.

(*Turning round angrily.*)

Thrall, thou darest!

Where hast thou got it?

OLAF.

(*Takes his hat off, and throws off his cloak.*)

On my shoulders, Earl.

Forgive me that I bring it thee myself
 In such a way, 'twas easiest for me.

HAKON.

What, Olaf! Ha! what treachery is here.

OLAF.

Old grey-beard, spare thy rash, heroic wrath.
 Attempt not to fight Olaf, but remember
 That he has still his head upon his body,
 And that thy impotent, grey-bearded strength
 Was only fitting for the headless Olaf.

HAKON.

(*Rushes at him.*)

Ha! Hilfheim.

OLAF.

(*Strikes his sword, and says in a loud voice.*)

So, be quiet now, I say,
And sheathe thy sword again. My followers
Surround the house, my vessels are a match
For all of thine, and I myself have come
To win the country in an honest fight.
Thyself hast urged me with thy plots to do it.
Thou standest like a despicable thrall
In his own pitfall caught at last, but I
Will make no use of these advantages
Which fate has granted me. I am convinced
That I may boldly meet thee, face to face.
Thy purpose, as thou seest, has wholly failed,
And in his own blood does thy Thorer swim.
Thou seest 'twere easy for me to have seized thee ;
To strike thee down, were even easier still,
But I the Christian doctrine do confess,
And do such poor advantages despise.
So choose between two courses. Still be Earl
Of Hlade as thou wast, and do me homage,
Or else take flight ; for when we meet again
'Twill be the time for red and bleeding brows.

HAKON.

(*Proudly and quietly.*)

My choice is made. I choose the last, Olaf.
Thou callest me a villain and a thrall ;
That forces up a smile upon my lips.

Olaf, one hears, indeed, that thou art young ;
It is by mockery and arrogance
That one can judge thy age. Now, look at me
Full in the eyes, consider well my brow ;
Hast thou among the thralls e'er met such looks ?
Dost think that cunning, or that cowardice
Could e'er have carved these wrinkles on my brow ?
I did entice thee hither. Ha ! 'tis true,
I knew thou didst wait but for a sign
To flutter after the enticing bait ;
That in thy soul thou didst more highly prize
Thy kinship with an extinct race of kings
Than great Earl Hakon's world-renowned deeds ;
That thou didst watch the opportunity
To fall upon the old man in his rest.
Does it astonish thee that I should wish
To quickly rid myself of such a foe ?
That I deceived a dreamer who despised
The mighty gods ; does that astonish thee ?
Does it astonish thee that I approved
My warriors' purpose, since a hostile fate
Attempted to dethrone, not only me,
But all Valhalla's gods.

OLAF.

Remember, Hakon,
Remember, Hakon, that e'en thou thyself
Hast been a Christian ; that thou wast baptized

By Bishop Popo, and that thou since then
Hast broke thy oath. How many hast thou broke?

HAKON.

Accur'sd for ever may that moment be
When by the cunning monk I was deceived,
And let myself befooled by paltry tricks.
He held a red-hot iron in his hand
After, by magic, he had covered it
With witches' ointment.

OLAF.

Oh! thou blind old man,
Thy silver hair does make me pity thee.

HAKON.

Ha! spare thy pity; as thou seest me here,
Thou seest the last flash and the latest spark
Of ancient northern force and hero's life;
And that, with all thy fever-stricken dreams,
Proud youth, thou shalt be powerless to quench.
I well do know it is the Christian custom
To pity, to convert, and to amend.
Our custom is to heartily despise you,
To ruminate upon your fall and death,
As foes to gods and to a hero's life.
That Hakon does, and therein does consist
His villainy. By Odin, and by Thor,
Thou shalt not quench old Norway's warlike flame
With all thy misty dreams of piety.

OLAF.

'Tis well, fate shall decide. We separate;
And woe to thee when next we meet again.

HAKON.

Aye, woe to me if then I crush thee not.

OLAF.

HEAVEN SHALL STRIKE THEE WITH ITS FIERY MIGHT!

HAKON.

NO, WITH HIS HAMMER THOR THE CROSS WILL SMITE!

END OF THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

THE SACRIFICIAL GROVE.

EARL HAKON. A MESSENGER.

HAKON.

Announce thy message. Speak out without fear
 And without reticence. What is thy news ?
 The peasants' forces are assembled ?

MESSENGER.

Yes, my lord ;

In discontent they come in crowds together.
 Orm by four different roads did send around
 The fiery messenger, and did summon all
 To arm themselves and hasten to him there,
 That they should kill thee ; and he sent to Haldor,
 At Skjerdingga, and he again did send
 The bodestick further on. With him Sigurd,
 Lord of the lovely Brynjolf, whom thou lov'dst
 Has joined himself with Alf and Skjalm of Rind,
 Who hasten to avenge their sister's shame.

They two with Orm and Haldor lead the force
Which has assembled in the dale of Orke.

HAKON.

I can rely upon my warriors brave.
With but a few but valiant well-armed men,
Brought up to deeds of war, 'tis easy to
Disperse a band of peasants.

MESSENGER.

But, my lord,
Their force is great, gets greater day by day ;
And discontent has armed them to the teeth.

HAKON.

With but a momentary courage, which
Will disappear before my mighty sword.
What more ? Does Olaf with his ships approach ?

MESSENGER.

Yes ; he has entered into Drontheim's fjord.

HAKON.

What ! in the fjord ? Was no resistance made ?
Did Erland, did my son not meet him there
To bar his passage ?

MESSENGER.

Ah ! my lord, alas !

HAKON.

Why dost thou sigh ? Speak freely, what occurred ?

MESSENGER.

This morning Olaf came into the fjord
With five long ships of war all hung with shields,
Thy son was there, thy Erland, with but three,
The others lay far off within the bay.
A mist fell all around, and Erland had
No time to signal his distress to them.
At first he thought they were thy barks, my lord ;
But when they nearer came he did perceive
That he had been mistaken ; then he made
Towards the land, but 'twas too late, for Olaf
Came quietly with his followers in the fjord.
He thought to find thyself where Erland was,
And bade his men to row with all their strength.
As Erland and his men came near the shore,
And as his vessel ran aground, he leapt,
He and his warriors, overboard ; for what
Could he with three small barks and scanty crews
Attempt to do against the five, which all
Were swarming with steel-coated, well-armed men ?
He plunged beneath the water, and essayed
By that device again to come to land.
But Olaf never lost him from his sight,
He saw the shining harness and the shield,
Surpassing in its beauty all the rest,
And ever did he think that it was thou,
And cried, " Earl Hakon, this time thou shalt not
Escape thy death. Remember what we said ;
We swore that when we met that heads should
bleed."

And with these words the king the tiller seized
And flung it forth—oh ! lord, spare me the pain
Of saying more, thyself of hearing more.

HAKON.

Speak, speak ! he flung the tiller from his hand ?

MESSENGER.

And struck thy son upon the brow, so that
The skull was broken, and the brain gushed out
Into the sea.

HAKON.

(Concealing his grief.)
Hast more to say ?

MESSENGER.

Then Olaf
Was disappointed that it was not thou
Whom he had struck ; his men killed many lives ;
At last he gave them peace, and then he learnt
The rising of the peasants, and he knew
Their feelings unto thee, lord.

HAKON.

Is there more ?

MESSENGER.

No, my lord Earl.

HAKON.

Then go. (*Exit MESSENGER.*)
And thou wast wroth

That 'twas not me thou smotest, Olaf? Ha!
Thou never couldst smite better. 'Twas not thou
Who smotest him, my Erland; no, not thou.
Ran clasped him in her motherly embrace
And raised the fair young hero up from earth
To Valhal. But his father thou hast struck;
Deep thou hast struck Earl Hakon in his heart.
Oh! Erland, Erland! Oh! my son, my son!
What, weeping, Hakon? tears upon thy cheek?
'Tis long since such was seen. Earl Hakon, thou
Art getting old, and weepest as a woman.
Oh! he was dear to me; my age's hope
(For Erik fights but for his own account);
As my successor I considered him.
And ye, my dreams, do ye thus fly away?

*(He remains silent a moment, and then says
dismayed.)*

All goes amiss, aye, all things go amiss!
How? Is Valhalla shrouded by the cloud?
Is Odin's golden crown in Hlidskjalf rust?
Has it lost all brightness? Thou green Frigga;
Ha! mother, dost thou quickly wither like
An autumn birch? Has Loke stolen again
Thy gold bowl Ydun with the ruddy fruit?
Where is thy hammer, Thor? Where, Asatyr,
Thy left hand, strong and deadly in the fight?
Say, mighty host, have ye all hid yourselves
In gloom to follow pious Baldur home?
Up, up, Earl Hakon, ancient Norway's chief;

Men call thee, now, a heathen—honoured name !
Aye, truly heathen, Hakon, for thou fightest
For heathendom ; to arms ! to victory !
Oh ! pardon Hakon, mighty, holy gods,
That he forgot Valhalla in himself.
Ye hear me now, ye hear, from henceforth I
Devote my life eternally to you.
The lovely dream, that once the evening sun
Should gild my brow before it sank to rest,
Has disappeared. A storm has risen up
With rain and sleet, and shrouded in the sun.
And when the blue of heaven appears again
The stars will glitter down on Hakon's grave.
Ran took my son, my Erland. Erling still
Remains to me, but can I dare to hope
That such a tender blossom should defy
The tempest's force ? I here do swear an oath
By all the precious stones in Odin's crown,
The burnished stars, and by thy chariot, Thor,
Which every midnight turns its bright pole down,
That henceforth do I live for Valhal's gods.
If pride seduced me, pardon my offence.
Thou lovely Saga ! thou didst me bewitch.
And was it in displeasure at my deeds,
Odin, that thou didst knit thy brows in wrath ?
Demand a sacrifice, whate'er thou wilt,
And thou shalt have it.

(Enter STEIN with a large gold horn.)
Ha ! what dost thou bring ?

STEIN.

A booty from the enemy, my lord.
Thou art aware that Olaf sent on shore
A band of masons, who upon the land,
Here in the wood—close to the fjord, should build
A house, or, as they term it now, a church
For their new gods, and thou most properly
Didst order that immediately thy men
Should thither go to stop them in their work.
Thy wishes are fulfilled, but ere we came
Had Olaf's men already deeply dug
The earth, and found this horn, which now we have
Reconquered from them, lord, to bring to thee.

HAKON.

'Tis good. Have many others come with thee ?

STEIN.

We are a score.

HAKON.

Then see ye get to eat
There in the hall. Let each one of you have
A horn as large as this filled up with mead.

STEIN.

Which we will empty to thy health, my lord.

(*Exit.*)

HAKON.

A splendid sacrificial horn of gold,
Of beaten gold. A rare and ancient horn.

Upon that spot, no doubt, in former times
 There stood a temple to the mighty gods,
 And there wouldest thou thy churches now erect !
 And gloomy monasteries, no, Olaf; no.
 'Twas right, my men, to drive them off ; 'twas right
 That ye obtained for me this ancient treasure,
 As beautiful as holy. There are runes
 On the horn's rim, let's see what's written there.

(*Reads.*)

“ Son, if thy fortunes
 Suffer for thy sins,
 Go to the great gods,
 Give them thy best.”

(HAKON remains a long time in thought. He
 then reads the last line again slowly and
 solemnly.)

“ Give them thy best.”

'Tis that ye want, inexorable gods !
 The best ye want ; will ye then be appeased ?
 I comprehend the sign, thou mighty Skuld.
 I see thee, with thy head in linen wrapped,
 Sitting beneath the ash of Ygdrasil,
 Deeply the source of Urdur dost thou stir.
 Are the waves red ? demands the ocean blood ?
 The best ? and what is, then, the best I have ?
 My Erland fell, with him ye took the best ;
 But Hakon did not offer it himself,
 And he himself must give the best he has
 To gain once more his vanished fortune, which

Did suffer for his sin, for he forgot
Valhalla in himself. Give him thy best !
Oh ! I have still a pretty little child,
With golden hair, and eyes as blue as heaven,
And quick and active as a mountain goat ;
The last drop of my manhood's blood is there ;
And him do ye demand ? Thou Freia bright,
Couldst thou demand what thou thyself didst grant ?

(*Thunders.*)

Two sacrifices do the gods demand ;
One to exalt their might and majesty,
Then oxen fall, then fall the captured foes,
And flames of joy do quiver up from earth,
And mighty Odin smiles upon his throne.
The second is as an atonement made,
Its glow alone can soothe Valhalla's wrath,
Then does the heart bleed while the victim bleeds ;
'Tis done in silence, without noise or song ;
It is a punishment, and brings the gods
To mercy when they turn from us in wrath.

(*He looks closely at the horn.*)

Here with distinct and tranquil letters stands
Engraven in the gold, " Give me thy best,"
And wherefore should it now be brought to me ?
Now, in this moment, when I swore to Odin
That I would live for him alone, now, when
I did confess. Fie, Hakon, thou art weak !
Thorgerdur Horgabrud, thou greedy goddess,
Who followest the warriors in the fight

Upon thy milkwhite charger, with thy mantle
 Around thy shoulders stained with lukewarm blood,
 Holding death's falchion in thy mighty hand,—
 Thy sombre eye does glisten for its prey ;
 Thou stretchest out thy hand, thy dagger gleams ;
 Well, Hakon hears thee—Hakon trembles not.

(*Exit.*)



THE FOREST.

THANGBRAND. GRIF.

THANGBRAND.

'Tis well I meet with thee, my Grif; where is
 King Olaf? What does his behaviour mean?
 Where is he gone with the old man?

GRIF.

They still

Walk up and down together in the wood ;
 They touched on various topics in their talk,
 And often the old man expressed himself
 In terms confused and most ambiguous
 Respecting Olaf's deeds.

THANGBRAND.

I was not there ;

What did he say, and wherefore did he come ?

GRIF.

To keep the eve of Pentecost we sat
In joy assembled round the oaken board ;
King Olaf filled with mirth and light of heart.
Then came an old man slowly in the hall,
He had a single eye, he placed himself
Beside the door, but Olaf, who is ever
So hospitable, bade him nearer come
And seat himself beside him ; then the two
Began to talk together earnestly.
The old man showed that he was well informed
Of all that in the country had occurred.
He then began to banter in a way
Which did not well accord with Olaf's thought.
He said, " Ah ! I perceive ye solemnize
Confusion's feast to-day ; do ye remember
That evening when the pious brotherhood
Were all seized with a fancy that each should
Speak in an unknown tongue, and do ye think
That they since then have understood each other ?"
At last the old man found that in the hall
It was too hot, and, as the summer night
Was warm and sultry, he did Olaf beg
To walk with him about the grove. The king
Acceded to his wish. I followed them,
But always at a distance. Ah, my lord !
Thou scarce canst think how far they wandered on ;
The old man led the king at times upon
The edges of the rocks, and pointed out

The country as he spoke. Meanwhile the moon
 Shone brightly down. Oh ! it was passing strange,
 For when we stood a little distance off
 The old man, covered with his sombre cloak,
 Appeared an evil sprite. I wish the king
 Would now return and lay himself to rest,
 For it is late and dews of night do fall.

THANGBRAND.

Where is he ? lead me to the king, my Grif,
 For long ago the sun set in the west.
 To-morrow, when it rises, it shall smile
 Upon the holy feast of Pentecost,
 And yet the evening mass has not been sung.
 How can I understand this deed of Olaf's ?
 For till this time he never did neglect
 His holy duties. Let us seek him, come. (*Exeunt.*)

(Enter OLAF and ANDEN from the other side.

*The latter with a black cloak and a hood
 over his head.)*

ANDEN.

Oh ! yes, I understand thee well, proud youth.
 The lovely songs in the high-vaulted church
 Did melt into thy heart. Thy eyes beheld,
 And were enraptured by the beauteous forms,
 And thou didst think that what thou then didst feel
 Should all the northern countries also feel,
 Or else should taste the power of thy sword.
 Is it not so ?

OLAF.

Thou art a grey, old man,
And stubborn in thy faith thou hast become.
I do not blame thee that thou look'st upon
My holy exploits as bewilderment.

ANDEN.

Thou sayest I am stubborn in my faith,
The term is good and aptly chosen ; but
Tell me, Olaf, that which now thyself
Dost say I am, might not the same be said
Of all that does exist ? For what is faith ?
Canst thou describe it otherwise than as
A special, a peculiar inclination,
A bent which drives the forces of our soul
Towards the unseen, mighty source of all ;
A bent as various as the being which
It works upon ; as various as the time
It works in ; various as nature's self.
Thus, Olaf, do these mighty pines strive forth,
And these high rocks ; the boldness with which they
Do proudly raise their heads into the sky
Is, so to say, their faith, and dost remark
They all confess one common faith ? for, as
Thou must admit, it cannot be for nought
That everywhere, as far as eye can reach,
And overlook the whole of the free North,
One mind, one being sets its stamp on all.
In southern valleys is it otherwise ?

There the fair foliage broadens itself out
In round smooth leaves, the stems no longer shoot
Up from the earth to tower in the sky,
In pious curves they darkly bend themselves
Beneath the mighty vault, like Olaf's monks
When they do bow themselves to say the mass.

OLAF.

Thou strange old man !

ANDEN.

And where the sky remains
For ever blue, where nightly sets the sun
In golden glory, where luxurious groves
Invite the soul to music and to love ;
There rise the arts of tuneful chords and song,
And colours bright are used to represent
The brilliant sunbeams and the flowery mass ;
And love, which hovers all around, becomes
The stamp which is imprinted on the whole.
But here, where nature, more severe and grave,
Produces stones instead of flowers, where
The fallen snow envelopes half the year
With its white covering, and, moreover, where
The hardened sinews constantly are braced
With increased strength, where nature's self does
teach
The virtue to deny oneself, and to
Preserve with force and might the sparingly given
And fenced in joy,—there songs are never heard,

And there no holy pictures e'er are seen ;
But in the long, cold winter nights, the soul
Silent is filled with mighty, manly thoughts.
There blooms the inward blossom which does wind,
Like a fair rose, around the women's heart,
And, like a lovely, pure, and hardy lily,
Around the hero's brows. No tightened cloth
With soon dissolving shadows mixed with shade,
But from the rock itself imperishable.
From the earth's bosom rise the mighty gods,
And gaze with tranquil and with thoughtful mien
Down o'er the valleys ; by an innate want
The inward force is urged to perform
The deeds of manhood, force opposed to force ;
And bravery and manhood is the stamp
Here in the North, as love is in the South.

OLAF.

Thy speech is marvellous.

ANDEN.

Now, if a youth,
Whom accident had driven to the South,
Should bring with him a basket full of those
Weak, foreign blossoms ; if he should desire
To plant them in old Norway's mountain clefts,
If everywhere the pines and birches did
Obstruct his path, and if he then would fell
The ancient mighty forests, should not spare
Even the mightiest and noblest tree,

In order that his roses might have room
 To flourish ; Olaf, if thou sawest this deed,
 What wouldest thou call that man ?

OLAF.

Get thee behind me.

ANDEN.

A hero, doubtless ! fighting for the good,
 The holy cause. But if an old man came
 And said to him, " Boy, let my pines alone,
 Thy tender herbs will not thrive on my rocks,"
 By what name wouldest thou call him ?

OLAF.

Like to thee.

ANDEN.

(*Looking at him fixedly.*)

And who am I ?

OLAF.

Is Anden not thy name ?

Who art thou ?

ANDEN.

Aye, who am I, wise young man ?
 Thou knowest all, thou mightest well know me.

OLAF.

Thou hast a single eye !

ANDEN.

Has the light more ?

Is not the night bright with its single eye ?
And with the other will to-morrow shine.
Recall to mind what thou hast heard ; remember
The moonlight which in this clear summer night
With health has penetrated to thy heart.

OLAF.

God give me strength. It is the first time now
That doubt and fear have filled my trembling breast.

(OLAF turns away from ANDEN, who disappears quickly among the trees. Enter THANGBRAND and GRIF.)

THANGBRAND.

Ha ! now at last I meet thee here, my King !
I have been searching for thee everywhere.
Oh ! pious Olaf, how canst thou explain
That thou thy evening worship didst neglect ;
For such a thing thou ne'er hast done before,
And least of all on such a holy eve
As this is ?

OLAF.

Thangbrand ! (Looks round.)

Where is the old man gone ?

THANGBRAND.

I know not. But forget the grey-haired heathen,
Who has perplexed thy spirit with his words.

OLAF.

Ha ! Thangbrand, has the evening mass been sung ?

THANGBRAND.

At sunset should the mass be sung, but thou
 Didst not perceive my signs or hear my voice ;
 The old man's words did captivate thy ear
 Just like a syren's song.

OLAF.

Who is the man ?

GRIF.

He is not known to any of thy men ;
 His mien is passing strange ; it seems to me
 That he resembles Odin in the grove.

OLAF.

His name is Anden.

GRIF.

Well, Anden, Odin,

It is about the same.

THANGBRAND.

My Olaf, surely

'Tis one of Odin's priests who came to see thee,
 And sought by wild and by bewildering words,
 Inspired by Hakon, to divert thy thoughts.

OLAF.

Whoever he may be, he surely is
 An evil spectre from the Prince of Darkness.
 He sought to prove to me how great a sin

It was to tear away the people from
Their ancient faith.

THANGBRAND.

And as a proof of this
With powerful words he, doubtless, pointed out
How beautifully bloomed the ancient faith
In the cold North,—but that it also had
Been introduced from a far distant land
By foreign heroes from the East ; of that
Was there no hint in all the old man's words ?

OLAF.

Ha ! Thangbrand, thou art right. Old as they are,
These doctrines once were introduced. What then
Is worth all that he said of warrior faith,
On which the North, who made it, did impress
Its stamp ?

THANGBRAND.

My Olaf, nought ! for no more here
In the wild north, than anywhere on earth,
Is it allowed to shed a brother's blood,
Or to neglect the doing of good deeds.
What is there to oppose the unruly stream,
And all the ruin that the time fulfils,
If time itself should not sometimes beget
A hero, who should chase the sombre mists
And break the chains of custom ?

OLAF.

Right, my Thangbrand.

THANGBRAND.

Far be it from me that I should condemn
 The ancient doctrine in its dusky source.
 It is not for nought that God vouchsafed it power,
 Widely to work in might upon the earth ;
 Now it is but a memorable ruin,
 Then were the Christian doctrines still unknown !
 A man should ever labour to attain
 The best ; to cling now to the ancient faith,
 In part forgot, in part misunderstood,
 Were pure idolatry.

OLAF.

Thou speakest truth.

THANGBRAND.

In the Lord's hands commit thyself : let not
 Thy heart be shaken with delusive words.
 Thou'st taken on thyself a holy work,
 Fulfil it as a hero, and thy name
 Hereafter shall be blessed in all the North.
 Thou seest how the ancient heathendom
 But pants for breath ; it gasps as if in death.
 Earl Hakon's force is nought but impotence.
 What can he do ?

OLAF.

To-morrow I do hope
 To celebrate the holy Pentecost,
 By conquering Earl Hakon's heathen troops,
 And him himself. Already dawns the day,

My army is prepared ; but first a prayer,
And then to deeds.

THANGBRAND.

His thralls have robbed me of
An ancient horn which in the earth I found,
And which I gladly would have fashioned as
An altar chalice. In an ancient tongue
Were written words which would have suited well.
There stood—‘ In case thy fortunes suffer for
Thy sins, my son, go to the mighty gods,
Give them thy best ’—and this inscription should
My chalice have retained. What offering can
Be better than a pure and thankful heart ?
They robbed me of it, let them keep it now ;
The punishment of God will follow them,
As well for this as for their other sins.

OLAF.

Lo, from the sea does simmer up the sun ;
Soon with its golden rays it shall shine down
Upon the fair Pentecost in Norway.
As yet we have no Church, but let us go
And hasten to the chapel which is formed
Yonder by Nature’s self among the rocks.
There shall the holy hymns of praise resound
Towards the rising sun, and chase away
With night’s dark shadows, all doubt from our
hearts.

THANGBRAND.

Such words are worthy of thee, pious king !

(*Exeunt THANGBRAND and OLAF.*)

GRIF.

(*Who has been wrapped in thought.*)

A priest, a messenger from Hakon ; aye !

It may be so, but *I* know what I think. (Exit.)



THE SACRIFICIAL GROVE.

Enter EARL HAKON, leading his son ERLING by the hand.

ERLING.

It is so cold, my father !

HAKON.

My dear son,

It is yet early, therefore is it cold ;

Thou shiverest, child !

ERLING.

That matters not, my father.

I am so glad that thou didst promise me

That I should see the sun arise to-day ;

A sunrise have I never seen before.

HAKON.

Dost see the golden rays which yonder break
Far in the east ?

ERLING.

(Clapping his hands.)

What lovely roses, father !

Oh, see the lovely roses, how they blush !
But tell me, my dear father, whence do come
Such masses of these lovely pearls, which are
Strewed over all the valley down below ?
Oh, how they glitter up towards the roses !

HAKON.

Those are no pearls ; it is but morning dew.
That which thou callest roses is the sun,
Dost see it rise ?

ERLING,

Oh, what a ball of fire,
How crimson red ! Oh, father dear, can we
Not travel thither to the morning sun ?

HAKON.

Towards the sun our life must ever strive,
For seest thou that lovely ruddy glow
Which glitters yonder, that is Odin's eye.
The other, which by night thou seest shine
With a far softer and a paler glow,
Has he now left in pledge in Mimer's well,
That there it may obtain the drink which makes
His eye more fresh and more acute.

ERLING.

And where

And what is Mimer's well ?

HAKON.

The mighty sea,
 There, deep below, which dashes 'gainst the rocks ;
 That is ancient Mimer's deep dug well,
 That strengthens Odin's eye, and doubly bright
 The sun arises, joyful and refreshed
 By the cool morning waves.

ERLING.

Oh, how on high
 It rises up ! I can no longer bear
 To gaze upon it, for it burns my eyes.

HAKON.

The Almighty father mounts upon his throne,
 And soon the whole world will he look upon.
 The golden throne does dazzle earthly eyes,
 Who dares presume to gaze upon the king
 Of light and day in his full mid-day glow.

ERLING.

(*Turning round frightened.*)
 Oh, oh ! my father, who are those ? such grim
 And old white men, who in the shadow stand
 Behind the trees, there ?

HAKON.

Speak not so, my son !
 Those are the statues of the mighty gods,
 Formed in the hard stone by the hands of men.
 They do not dazzle us with summer flames,

To them may Askur's sons kneel down in peace,
And gaze with reverence upon their face.
Come, let us go and see them closer, come.

ERLING.

Oh, no, my father, I do fear ! Dost see
That old, long-bearded, hoary-headed man ?
He looks so fierce and grim upon me. Oh,
He makes me quite afraid !

HAKON.

Oh, Erling, Erling !
That is god Odin ; art afraid of Odin ?

ERLING.

No, no ; of Odin I am not afraid,—
The real Odin yonder in the sky.
He will not harm me : he is good and bright,
He calls forth flowers from the lap of earth,
And like a flower does he gleam himself.
But that white, pallid sorcerer, he stares
As though he sought to take my life-blood.

HAKON.

Ha !

ERLING.

My father, let me go and fetch my wreath,
I left it hanging yonder on a bush
When thou didst show me when the sun arose,
And let us then go home again, my father,

Away from these grim, ancient statues here :
 For thou mayest well believe the grim old man
 Has no goodwill towards thee, father dear.

HAKON.

Go, fetch thy wreath, child, then come back at once.
 (Exit ERLING.)

The sacrificial lamb should be adorned.
 Ye mighty gods, behold from Valaskjalf
 Earl Hakon's faith and truth confirmed by deeds.

(Re-enter ERLING with a wreath of flowers
 round his head.)

ERLING.

Here am I, my dear father, with my wreath.

HAKON.

Kneel down, my son, to Odin, ere thou goest,
 Stretch out thy little hands towards the sky,
 And say, great Father, hear the little Erling,
 And mercifully take him in thy charge.

ERLING.

(Kneels down, looking towards the sun, stretches
 out his hands and says, innocently and child-
 like.)

Great Father, hear the little Erling's prayer,
 And mercifully take him in thy charge !

(HAKON, who stands behind him, draws his
 dagger while ERLING is saying his prayer,

and raises it to strike, but it falls from his hand. ERLING turns towards him quietly and confidently, picks up the dagger, and says, as he gets up off his knees,)

My father dear, thou'st let thy dagger drop.
How sharp and bright it is ! When I am big
Then I shall also have such weapons, and
Will help thee 'gainst thy enemies, my father.

HAKON.

What sorcerer is't that places in thy mouth
Such words as these, to scare me, and to make
Me tremble ?

ERLING.

Oh, my father ! what's the matter ?
What has then Erling done ? Why art thou wroth ?

HAKON.

Come, Erling, follow me behind the gods.

ERLING.

Behind the grim men ?

HAKON.

Follow, and obey.

Behind the statues do the roses grow ;
No pale white roses, ruddy roses they,
Blood-red and purple roses. Ha ! it is
A joy to see how quickly they shoot forth.
Follow, I say,—obey !

ERLING (*Weeping.*)

My father dear,
I am so frightened at the purple roses.

HAKON.

Away, already Heimdal's cock does crow,
And now the time is come, the time is come!

(*Exeunt.*)

(Enter EINAR TAMBESKJÆLVER *hurriedly,*
armed with spear and bow.)

EINAR.

Where is he ? I was told that he was here,
Here in the offering grove ; no Earl is here !
Where is he then ? what would he here ? The time
Is come for fighting, and is past for prayer.

(*He listens ; a child's screams are heard behind
the statues.*)

Ye gods ! what can that be ? Earl Hakon, Hakon !

(Re-enter HAKON with bloody hands.)

HAKON.

Who's that who calls me ?

EINAR.

Ha ! what does this mean ?

HAKON.

What wouldest thou ?

EINAR.

Hakon, haste thee to the fight.

King Olaf has come here in haste to join

The peasant army: all do now approach
Towards thy court. Thy army is prepared,—
I have assembled them,—they seek for thee,
But thou wert nowhere to be found. Hast made
Another offering?

HAKON.

Yes!

EINAR.

What hast thou offered?

'Twill be of much avail!

(Exit to see the offering.)

HAKON.

Now it is done;

Now force and energy.

EINAR.

(Re-enter horrified.)

Ha, thou sorcerer!

What hast thou done?

HAKON.

Assuaged great Odin's wrath,

Offered my happiness, my only hope,

For Norway's good.

EINAR.

May Nither crush me dead

With clubs and stones in Hilfheim, if e'er I

E'en for a moment bend my bow again

For thee, or for thy fate, although I love
Thy daughter Berglioth.

(*He tears the gold chain from his neck.*)

There is thy chajn;

With that I free myself from all the links
Which bound me unto thee, thou man of blood.
I go to fight for Olaf Trygveson.

The time has come thou teachest me to shudder
At all thy gods. Now Olaf's God shall conquer.
What does prevent me now from slaying thee,
And hurling thee at once to hell ? But no,
Public and shameful shall be thy defeat ;
For I will capture, aye, will capture thee,
And Olaf will I help to hang thee up
Upon the highest and most shameful tree.

(*Exit.*)

HAKON.

And I must hear it !

(*A noise in the distance; voices calling,
HAKON, HAKON !*)

HAKON.

(*Drawing his sword.*)

Now the time is come
Which shall decide for Odin or for Christ.
Hark, how it thunders ! it is the goddesses ;
'Tis but the Valkyries who flutter there
High in the air, and who with frightful shouts,
Call to the battle. Fearfully the veins

Do swell in Heimdal's temples, as he blows
With all his force upon his sounding horn.

Thordergur, Horgabrud, grant time, I come!
My Erling, I have offered thee, and thee
A mighty host shall follow of thy foes.

(*Exit.*)

END OF FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

CASTLE OF RIMOL.

*Night. THYRA and INGER are sitting at a table working.
The candles on the table have burnt down to the sockets.*

THYRA.

My Inger, thou art weary, I perceive.

INGER.

Aye, madam, midnight is already past.
But hush ! some one is knocking at the gate.
'Tis they, 'tis they.

THYRA.

'Tis but the storm, it thunders
As though it would tear down the walls. It is
A fearful night. In lashes fall the hail,
And rain and winter darkness all around ;
Hear only how it beats against the panes.

INGER.

Ah ! madam, dost thou think thy brothers would
Ride hither in such weather ; they do rest
Until 'tis day, or till the storm clears up.
Be without fear.

THYRA.

If thou art sleepy, Inger,
Get thee to bed ; sleep flies from me to-night,
I know the fight should have been fought to-day.
And Skjalm and Alf did promise me for sure
Hither to come, as soon as possible,
To let me know what there has taken place.
Go to thy bed, my Inger, go to rest.

INGER.

I will right gladly rest a little while
If you permit me, noble lady. Hark !
The gate is strongly shaken ; surely, that
Is not the storm ?

THYRA.

See, Hadding opens it.
I hear the footsteps of a man below.

INGER.

Oh ! it is they. Oh ! it is they. I go
To light them. Thyra, it is they ; rejoice. (*Exit.*)

THYRA.

With what anxieties I am oppressed ;
My Alf and Skjalm 'gainst Hakon ; whoe'er wins,
Poor Thyra can but lose.

(Enter EINAR TAMBESKJÆLVER.)

EINAR.

Good morning, lady,
Good morning, noble Thyra, for unless
. I am deceived, it is already morning.

Outside the cock has loudly crowed. I come
To tell thee what has happened in the fight.
My name is Einar Tambeskjælver. Do
Not fear that I am one of Hakon's friends,
For since he grimly slaughtered in the grove
His son, in madness to the gods, that he
Might gain the fight, am I his enemy.

THYRA.

Ye holy gods !

EINAR.

Thou'rt right, the hoary sinner
Deserves abhorrence, all his deeds excite it.
Thou hast good cause to hate him, like myself,
For he has deeply wounded thee.
At early dawn I went to Olaf's host,
My knowledge of thy brothers was but short,
But we became each other's friends at once.
We learnt to know each other ; one does need
An hour in battle only to find out
What one in peaceful times would scarcely learn
In a whole lifetime. Well, they fought like men,
As did the rest. King Olaf won the day ;
Like lightning did he scatter Hakon's force.
The work was hot beneath the blood-stained shields,
And hotly burnt the swords in bleeding wounds.
The Valkyries did mingle with the fight ;
Demanding blood, they got it ; Odin grants
To them no sweeter mead in Valaskjalf.

Many were killed, but Hakon and his thrall
Have fled, and they are being sought for now.

THYRA.

My brothers, Einar? Tell me of my brothers.
Thou comest, noble hero, but unknown,
Hither by night. I tremble, oh! my brothers.

EINAR.

Were hindered, that they cannot come themselves.
Rejoice, my noble Thyra; Alf and Skjalm
Rode to Valhalla with the rising sun;
Ere this they sit at mighty Odin's side,
And drain in welcomings the mighty horn.

THYRA.

Oh! Freia.

EINAR.

Noble Thyra should rejoice.
It is not prophesied at each man's birth
To die in such a noble way. They were
Ever the first in fight; we stood together,
Earl Hakon like a wounded bear did rage.
The fight was hard, for mighty hosts did meet,
And clashed with violence against each other.
One half of Norway for Earl Hakon fought,
The other half for Olaf; for his fame
Flew, like a flame in withered summer grass,
To the land's end; and ever Skjalm and Alf
Impetuously dashed towards the Earl.

They swore his death ; 'tis thee they would avenge,
But they both fell before his mighty sword ;
It strikes with fearful force when he is roused.
What more remains, their executioner
Was worthy of them, for say what one will
Earl Hakon is a warrior as are few,
E'en in the north. He proved it in the fight.

THYRA.

Oh ! Alf. Oh ! Skjalm. Oh ! my beloved brothers.
Oh ! my dear brothers.

EINAR.

I but envy them.

They are Einheriars, and now they gleam
In brilliant armour ; for their loins, ere now,
Has strong Vaulundor forged the glittering swords.
They shall be laid to-morrow in a grave
Which shall defy eternity, on which
Olaf shall raise a mighty monument.
Greet Thyra, greet our sister, did they cry,
Those were the last words which their lips did speak ;
I swore it, and I now have kept my oath.
I with one part of Olaf's men do ride
To search for Hakon. Olaf with the rest.
At Gaulaa shall we meet again. Olaf
Has called a parliament. I know not where.
Thyra, I came this little way around
For thy dear brothers' sake. Methinks it rains,
My helmet plume is dripping ; soon I hope

That we shall find the Earl, and thee avenge.
Now Frigga comfort thee. Farewell, I haste. (*Exit.*)

THYRA.

Ye holy gods ! What fearful destiny
Have ye reserved for poor Thyra. How
Has she deserved the bitter pangs with which
Alternately ye do her heart torment.

(*Enter a man enveloped in a cloak, which conceals his face.*)

Ha ! what is this ? A stranger, what wouldest thou ?

THE UNKNOWN.

Are we alone ? Are we in safety here ?

THYRA.

What speakest thou of safety, who dost force
Thyself into my house to frighten me.
Say out, what wouldest thou ?

THE UNKNOWN.

(*Taking off his cloak.*)

Dost thou know me, Thyra ?

THYRA.

Ye holy gods ! 'tis Hakon.

HAKON.

Aye, himself.

THYRA.

Thou fleest to me ?

HAKON.

By all Valhalla's gods,

Thou'rt right to be astonished. I would see
The noble stag that would not refuge seek
E'en beneath the most unlikely shelter,
When howling dogs do closely follow it.

THYRA.

Oh! Hakon, thou art pale, thy eye is dull.

HAKON.

Odin is witness that I fought as fights
A wolf that would protect its little ones.
With this sword have I to Valhalla sent
A mighty host of men. Now I am weary,
My army beaten, fortune turned from me,
And Olaf blunted with his Christian magic
The northern swords. A host proved faithless to me.
Now I have none on whom I can rely.
The Valkyries, the mighty Rota's hand,
Heavy and ice-cold lies upon my brow.
I, with my thrall, have ridden through the night,
Abandoned, weary with the hard day's fight.
By scorching thirst I long have been consumed.
Say, is that water in the goblet there?

THYRA.

Oh! Hakon, wait; let me go to fetch.

HAKON. (*Drinks.*)

No, no, remain. Ha! now my thirst is quenched.
At Gaulaa did at last my charger fall;
I slew him, and I tore my mantle off

And steeped it in the blood, that I might baffle
The enemies who followed me.

THYRA.

Oh ! Hakon.

HAKON.

And then I passed before thy castle, Thyra,
And I remembered how thou oft hadst sworn,
So solemnly enraptured, that thou wast
The only one who loved me from thy heart.
I know, indeed, full well that love may turn
To hate. I run the risk that it is so.
Here am I, Thyra ; wilt thou harbour me
From Olaf and his followers' pursuit ?
I shall be grateful for thy love, which I
So little could appreciate. In case—
In case thou shouldst refuse (Oh ! Thyra, it
Does cost Earl Hakon much to have to beg),
Then will I wander out into the night,
And take my last look o'er proud Norway's land,
Over the kingdom which did homage to me,
And then will tranquil fall upon my sword.
Then shall the wild storm with its mighty wings
Raise Hakon's spirit to the god of war,
The sun shall gaze down upon the hero's corpse
And say, He's great in death as in his life !

THYRA.

Oh ! Hakon, Hakon, speak not so. Oh ! Hakon,
I hate thee not, I cannot hate thee now.

And I will harbour thee, and keep thee safe,
And faithfully preserve thee from thy foes.

(She takes his hand.)

HAKON.

Dost know that I have slaughtered with this hand
My son, the little Erling, who was ever
So dear to thee ?

THYRA.

I know that thou didst offer
Him to the mighty gods ; that is a proof
Of the extremities to which fate brought
A soul as rare as thine.

HAKON.

And dost thou know
That with the hand thou art pressing now,
I have,—oh ! it is painful.

THYRA.

Aye, I know
That thou hast slain my brothers in the fight.

HAKON.

And yet

THYRA.

Does Thyra, Thyra still remain.
Aye, Hakon, thou hast hardly treated me,
And with disdain hast thou repulsed my love,
Hast slain my brothers ; but in time of war

Life is opposed to life, and Einar said,
They in Valhalla were in happiness.

(*She hides her face in her hands and weeps.*

*She then raises her head and looks fixedly at
the Earl.*)

Ha ! tell me, Hakon, is it thou who standest
In Thyra's chamber, in the forest house,
Far from the brilliant royal hall at Hlade,
Envolved in grim darkness of the night.
Here, where the storm beats against the castle walls,
As in my breast ? Say, Hakon, is the pale,
The silent man here in the hall, is't thou ?
Who faint, without thy casque, or purple cloak,
Dost lean upon thy sword ?

HAKON.

The pallid ghost

Thou seest was once great Norway's mighty lord.
The Norsemen proud obeyed his voice, he fell
In battle, in a battle fought at Hlade.
Ha ! that is long ago, almost forgotten
Now is it, but his spectre that does stalk
At midnight hours. Hakon was his name.

THYRA.

Ha ! now I am most fearfully avenged.
Away, weak spite, and love return again.
I were no woman, but a forest wolf,
If every spite did not fade from my breast
At such a sight. Oh ! rest upon my heart ;

Come, let me dry the sweat upon thy brow.

Come, let me bring new life into thine eye.

(She embraces him.)

HAKON. (*Mad.*)

What is thy name, thou fair Norwegian maid ?

THYRA.

Forget-me-not my playmates called me once,
 A light blue lovely little flower was I,
 Which had grown up within thy oaken roots,
 And sucked its life and colour only thence ;
 And which must perish altogether if
 It might not still live in its little corner,
 A shadow of thy stem.

HAKON.

Forget-me-not,

A friendly name.

THYRA.

Oh ! Hakon, what is this ?

A fever makes thee shiver in my arms,
 Thou'rt weeping, Hakon. Great Valhalla's gods !
 This is a dangerous, aye, a fearful sign,
 Ere this I ne'er saw tears upon thy cheek.

HAKON.

(*With a mad tenderness.*)

Forget-me-not, pale little flower upon
 A warrior's grave. My tears astonish thee.
 Hast thou ne'er seen before the hard stones weep

When brought from the cold air into the warmth ?
It is a death-sweat. Blossom of pale death,
Be not astonished at it.

THYRA.
Gentle Freia !

HAKON.

The mountain snow must melt. It soon is past,
In tears the hardy winter flows away ;
It must give place to the luxurious spring,
To Olaf's blossoms. Hakon is no more,
His pallid spectre stalks again. Approach
His body without fear, and boldly plunge
A stake right through it, deep into the earth,
'Twill haunt no more, and he will be at rest.

THYRA.

Compose thyself, my Hakon, speak not wildly.
The mightiest soul, however great and strong,
Must yield itself at last to nature's laws.
Too long already has thine heart been strained
Among thy foes, with wrath and opposition,
And now it overflows with tender tears.
Come, follow me, below there is a cavern
Ancient, and hollowed in the rock itself,
Unknown to all but me ; and there will I
Conceal thee, till the danger shall have passed.
Soon will a better fortune smile again.

HAKON.

Tell me the truth. Dost think the day will smile
Yonder upon the cavern's other side ?

THYRA.

I do not doubt it, my beloved lord.

HAKON.

And down into the deep and hollowed cavern,
A gloomy cell, unknown, beneath the earth,
Where foes are stopped, and danger disappears.
Down in that dusky but sure hiding-place,
'Tis thither thou wouldest lead me ?

THYRA.

Aye, my friend.

HAKON.

(*Taking her hand solemnly.*)

Then come, my Valkyrie, my valiant Hel,
I follow boldly.

THYRA.

Oh ! ye mighty gods.

HAKON.

Dost think I tremble ? though thy face is grim.
Indeed, thy face is pale, thy lips are blue.
Thou dost not, as thy sisters, kill with haste,
As Hildur, or the savage Geierskögul,
With one quick spear thrust, in an instant done.
Thou tortur'est slowly with the ice of fear,
The mortal's courage first, and then himself,

But just as surely. Let us hasten. Come,
Thou hast not quenched the fire of my pride,
And with firm steps I follow to the grave.

THYRA.

Oh ! all ye gracious gods, watch over him. (*Exeunt.*)

A WOODY COUNTRY SCENE NEAR GAULAA.

OLAF TRYGVESON. CARLSHOVED. JOSTEIN. GRIF.
WARRIORS.

GRIF.

See the dawn breaks, my lord, the sky is blue ;
To-day, it seems, will be as splendid as
The night was foul. Art thou not weary, lord ?
Wilt thou not take thy rest beneath,
And let the horses feed ?

OLAF.

No, no repose ;

I will not rest, for I have sworn an oath,
I will not rest until I find the Earl.
The shameful crime committed on his son,
That shall be punished—that shall cost his life.
Where could one find a match for such a deed !
The Holy Writ describes a patriarch,
Who with a crushed and sorrowing father's heart
Went to obey the voice of heaven ; but that
Was but a trial, and who knows if he

Would not have dropped the sharp steel from his
hand
If heaven had not hindered it in time.
But Hakon—

JOSTEIN.

Thou art right indeed, my lord,
It was a horrible, a fearful deed.

OLAF.

His host is scattered, but it is not beat.
The youthful Einar triumphs everywhere,
But still he is more valiant than discreet.
Should Hakon but gain time, and save himself,
The scattered streams will join themselves again
Soon in the mighty sea. I am not come
To desolate the land with skirmishes,
But solace it with peace and piety.
His sin must Hakon expiate by death,
For whilst he lives there is not any hope
Of peace and quiet. Whilst the heathen breathes
So long the Christian roses cannot thrive.

(Enter EINAR TAMBESKJÆLVER with HAKON'S
blood-stained cloak.)

EINAR.

Olaf, we need no further go, my lord.
Beside the brook, down yonder, lies his horse,
Cut down it lies, and close beside it I
Did find his silken mantle. Here it is

Besmeared with blood. One of thy followers
Must have met him. There he found his death.

OLAF.

Ha ! is it truth thou speakest ? Say, my friends,
Is this Earl Hakon's mantle ?

GRIF.

Aye, his mantle,
But where's the Earl ? Does he himself lie there,
Beside the brook ?

EINAR.

No, nothing but his horse ;
And mantle, both besmeared with blood.

GRIF.

Bring us the Earl himself. We then will rest,
But not before. Dost not know Hakon better ?
If I am not mistaken, sure the Earl
Now wears another mantle. Oh ! my lord,
Let not this trick deceive thee. It resembles
The cunning Earl. He only hoped by this
To baffle thee. I but know the Earl too well.

OLAF.

Away, we are not far from Rimol now,
'Tis there I called the Thing. There I will hear
If any traces of him have been found.

GRIF.

There Thyra lives, his loved one.

EINAR.

Formerly,
But Hakon grievously has injured her,
And her two brothers were the most incensed
Against the earl.

GRIF.

Ah ! well, we soon shall see ;
A search can never do us any harm.
'Tis said that ancient love does never rust.

OLAF.

The day breaks more and more,—to horse, away.

(*Exeunt.*)

A SUBTERRANEAN CAVERN.

Enter HAKON and KARKER, the latter with a light and dish of meat.

KARKER.

(*Holding the light up.*)

So this is then the hole where we must stay;
There is not too much room here. Where shall I
Set down the lamp ?

HAKON.

There, hang it on the hook,
On the wall yonder.

KARKER.

Aye, I can do that,
And here are benches hollowed in the stone,

Where one can sit and rest. My lord, wilt thou
Not eat? Thou hast not tasted any food
During this day and night.

HAKON.

I am not hungry.

Eat thou.

KARKER.

Aye, I will do so if it pleases thee.

He sits down and eats. (HAKON walks up and down with long steps.)

My lord, augh! 'tis indeed a horrid hole.
And didst thou see the coffin which did stand
Right in our way as we came through the door?

HAKON.

Hold thou thy tongue, and eat. (*Aside.*) In this dark
cave

Has Thyra wandered many a sleepless night,
And wept in solitude; and for her grave
Was this intended; privately she had
Her coffin made. 'Twas here that she did wish
Her beauteous body to be laid t'await
Corruption. (*Looks at KARKER.*) How now, thrall,
thou dost not eat.

In general thou art greedy after food,
What ails thee now?

KARKER.

Indeed, lord Earl, I am

Not hungry.

HAKON.

How, not hungry ? Wherefore that ?
 Eat, thrall, be glad and merry ; trust in me,
 Thy lord.

KARKER.

Alas ! my lord, thou art thyself,
 Methinks, discouraged, and oppressed at heart.

HAKON.

Oppressed at heart. Ha ! thrall, how darest thou ?
 Be merry ! if thou hast not heart to eat,
 Then sing. Aye, sing a song to me.

KARKER.

What song ?

HAKON.

Sing what thou wilt. Nay, rather sing me one
 Where the notes rattle fiercely and savagely,
 Like rain and hailstones in a wintry storm.
 A cradle song, my thrall, a cradle song.

KARKER.

A cradle song ?

HAKON.

Aye, that the old child here
 May slumber through the night without alarm.

KARKER.

I know a splendid battle song, my lord.

HAKON.

Has it a fearful ending ? Does it seem

At first, that all is excellent and good,
And ends at last with murder and with death ?

KARKER.

No, no, my lord, 'tis sad from the beginning.

HAKON.

'Tis so, I like it ; for the trick that all
Should open quietly and cheerfully,
In order that the contrast may at last
Be greater, has been played to weariness
By all our bards. When morning skies are grey
One knows at once what one has to expect.
Begin thy song.

KARKER. (*Sings.*)

Kings Harald and Erling sailed by night,
With a gentle breeze in the soft moonlight,
And they fired Oggard's castle wall,
And destroyed the earl in his ancient hall.

HAKON.

What, Karker, art thou mad ?
Dost choose my father's dirge to sing to me ?

KARKER.

Was Sigurd Earl thy father, then, my lord ?
I never knew it. Aye, but thou art right.
His end was terrible.

HAKON.

Be silent ; hush !

KARKER.

There is not even here a bit of straw,
Or matting to lie down upon and rest.

HAKON.

If thou art weary, lie upon the ground,
As I myself have often done.

KARKER.

I will,
My lord, shouldst thou permit me.

HAKON.

Aye, sleep, sleep.

(*KARKER lies down upon the ground and goes to sleep.* HAKON looks at him.)

Oh ! slothful nature. What so soon asleep ?
The little spark which witnessed that thou wast
An animal and not a block, does smoulder
Beneath a heap of ashes. Well for thee.
Here in my breast it flames and storms with more
Unruly force. Didst sing my father's dirge,
Now at this time ? Was that a sign to me
From the great Nornes ? Is Hakon's life to end
Like Sigurd's ? He and I were men of blood,
And valiant worshippers of ancient gods.
Under the show of friendship did he slay
King Athelstein ; he stopped him in his deeds.

(*Disturbed.*)

How now, can it indeed have come to pass

That the pale Christ has conquered the mighty Odin?
Who thus becomes the victim for the deeds
Which hindered southern faith. The air feels cold.
Here in the cavern it is chill and damp.

(*He walks up and down for some time, then stands still before KARKER.*)

He dreams; what evil, ugly looks appear
Upon the thrall's face. There he lies asleep,
And like a goblin grins beneath the lamp.

(*He wakes him.*)

Karker, awake, awake, thrall, what do mean
These fearful smiles?

KARKER.

What is it? Ha! I dreamt.

HAKON.

What didst thou dream?

KARKER.

I dreamt that—

HAKON.

Silence, hush!

What is that noise we hear above us? There.

KARKER.

My lord, a host of warriors. I hear
The rattling of their armour overhead.
No doubt, lord Earl, they are King Olaf's men,
Who come to seek for thee.

HAKON.

The ancient vault
Is quite unknown, and Thyra gave the key
To me. The door is barred with iron bolts ;
Here we are safe, for none can hither come.

KARKER. (*Listens.*)

Hush ! canst thou hear, my lord, the champion
shout,
Here just above my head ? Canst hear his words ?

HAKON.

What does he say ?

KARKER.

That great King Olaf will
With gold and honour recompense the man
Who brings thy head to him.

HAKON.

(*Looking at him fixedly.*)

That surely thou
Wouldst not attempt to gain. Why tremblest thou ?
Why art thou pale ? why are thy lips so blue ?

KARKER.

Oh ! I am frightened still at what I dreamt.
Tell me, my lord, what it does mean, for thou
Dost understand such things, and canst tell dreams.

HAKON.

What were thy dreams ?

KARKER.

The first one was, that we
Were both together in a boat, alone ;
I held the rudder.

HAKON.

That betokens, Karker,
That upon thee depends my length of life.
Be faithful, stand by me in my need,
And I shall give thee more reward than Olaf.

KARKER.

But I dreamt more.

HAKON.

What was it, Karker ? Speak !

KARKER.

I dreamt I saw a black and short-limbed man,
Who came down from the mountains, and did say,
That all the Sound was frozen in.

HAKON.

Ha, Karker !

Thy dreams are evil ; this indeed foretells
A brief and short-lived life for both of us ;
Be true and faithful. Thou thyself hast said
That we were both born in the self-same night ;
The time will therefore be but short between
Our deaths.

KARKER.

And then I dreamt I was at Hlade,

And that King Olaf let a golden ring
Be placed around my neck.

HAKON.

Ha! that betokens
That he shall place a coil of twisted hemp
Around thy neck, if thou shouldst faithlessly
Betray thy lord. Go to the corner there,
I in this corner will lie down myself,
And we will slumber.

KARKER.

As thou wilt, my lord.

HAKON.

What wouldst thou do?

KARKER.

I will put out the light.

HAKON.

Go, lie thee down, I say, and let it burn,
If thou shouldst put it out we should sit here
In gloom and darkness. I could ne'er conceive
How men can every evening quietly
Put out the light before they go to rest.
It is a hideous counterfeit of death,
And far more black and foul than sleep itself.
What gleams so pure and strongly as a light?
What does the light become when it is quenched?
Let the lamp be; it dimly burns, but still

As yet it does burn, and so long as there
Is life there still is hope. Lie down and sleep.

(*They both sit still for some time.*)

Now, Karker, dost thou sleep ?

KARKER.

Yes, my lord Earl.

HAKON.

Ha, dull and stupid slave !

(*He gets up and walks up and down the stage.*)

Oh, Hakon, Hakon !

Is this dull animal the last remains
Of all thy vanished might ? I trust him not,
For what conception can a brain like his
Have formed of faith and duty ? Like a hound
He comes and fawns upon the one who offers
The best to eat. Give me thy dagger, thrall,
A thrall should have no weapons.

KARKER.

Ah, my lord !

Thou gavest it me thyself ; well, there it is.

HAKON.

Now sleep.

KARKER.

At once.

(*He lies down.*)

HAKON.

A drowsy fever fit
 Is singing in my head. Oh ! I am weary
 Of the day's fighting and the night's escape,
 But now I dare not sleep because the thrall ;
 Well, I will rest a little, but will guard
 Against my drowsiness.

(*He sits down and goes to sleep.*)

KARKER.

(*Raising himself gently.*)

He sleeps ! He thinks
 Me false—he is alarmed, as I can well
 Perceive, lest I should prove a traitor to him.
 King Olaf offers gold and honour for
 His life ; what more can I obtain from him ?
 He moves ! Oh ! help me, Thor, he walks in sleep.

HAKON.

(*Still asleep, he gets up and walks a few steps, then remains standing in the middle of the stage.*)

Cold Harald Greyskin, what would ye with me ?
 Leave me in peace, ye did deserve your deaths !
 I did not mock you with a show of love.
 What will ye, maidens ? Ah, go home, go home !
 The time is past, I cannot banter now.
 And your betrothed, and Odin's statue which
 Fell flat to earth ! Thou, Olaf, wast ensnared.

Wouldst thou that Hakon now should fall into
The snare of death? What weeps behind the
bushes?

That is the worst. Oh, Erling! dost thou bleed?
Struck I too deep? There fell the purple drops
Upon the roses, dripping from thy breast.

(*He cries out loud.*)

Ha, Karker, Karker!

KARKER.

(*Coming near him.*)

Here, my lord! He still
Is walking in his sleep.

HAKON.

'Tis over now!

Here is my dagger, plunge it in my heart.

KARKER.

That will but make thee angry, shouldst thou wake.

HAKON.

I have deserved it, Karker,—plunge it deep.

KARKER.

He is my master—him I should obey.

HAKON.

Ha! haste thee, haste thee, Karker, ere I wake,
For either thou or I must die.

KARKER.

(*Stabs him in the breast.*)

Then die!

HAKON (*Falls.*)

There Heaven's vengeance struck me with its
flames !

Thy prophecy, Oh, Olaf ! is fulfilled ;
I feel the lightning burning in my breast. (*He dies.*)

KARKER.

It now is done, and vain are all complaints,
And should I shriek and howl however much,
I could not howl him back to life again.
Out of his pocket will I take the key,
And lay him in the passage by the door,
And everything disclose to great King Olaf,
And he shall gold and silver give to me.

(*He takes up the body on his shoulders and exit.*)

AN OPEN SPACE OUTSIDE THYRA'S CASTLE.

OLAF TRYGVESON, *armed with shield and spear, is standing on a high stone surrounded by the people.*

GRIF.

There come the men of Thronjem, now, my lord !
The Thing is full ; there fails not one of all
The deputies and spokesmen of the vales.
Here comes the smith, Bergthor, their oldest man ;
He fought upon thy side, but saw thee not,

Because the night fell ere the fight was done.
He is a man ! his daughters thou shouldst see,
His third wife brought to him, when he himself
Was over sixty.

(Enter BERGTHOR, with a number of peasants.)

BERGTHOR.

Brothers, there he stands !
How royally he stands upon the throne,
Like to Haarfager, like to Athelstein !

(Takes his cap off.)

Art thou the son of Trygve, King of Vige ?

OLAF.

Yes, I am Olaf, Trygve's only son.

BERGTHOR.

A proper man ! one knows the race at once.
Great Olaf, thou hast hither summoned us.
I am the spokesman of the Thronjem peasants,
Because I am the oldest. Welcome hither !
We fought for thee, but see thee first to-day,
For yesterday we had no time to see.
Each man of Norway has longed after thee,
And we will gladly choose thee as our king ;
Thereto wert thou with honour born. Behold !
Here is a crown, great Olaf. Hakon bade
Me fashion it ; but I did hammer it
Around an iron ring of Halfdan Svarte.
It fitted badly on Earl Hakon's head,

It fell down o'er his eyes. Now is the time
To see if it should fit upon thy head.

(OLAF *puts it on.*)

It fits him as though moulded on his brow.
Now strike upon your shields, ye peasant men,
Proclaim him king.

(*The people strike their shields with their swords.*)

PEOPLE.

Hail, Olaf Trygveson !

Our king, all hail to Olaf ! fealty
And truth we swear, aye, solemnly do swear,
By Odin, Vil, and Vee, by all the gods !

OLAF.

One God's enough, ye valiant Northern men,
Then swear by one alone,—the one true God
In Heaven,—who everything beholds and hears.

PEOPLE.

By Olaf's God, by Olaf's God we swear !

OLAF.

What does the tumult yonder mean ?

(Enter EINAR.)

EINAR.

My lord,

Thy sun has burst its gloomy thunder-clouds,
It thunders and it lightens now no more !
Upon a shield they bring Earl Hakon's corpse.
His ancient mistress, Lady Thyra, has,

As Grif assured us, not forgot her love ;
She had concealed him in an unknown cave.
There he was murdered by his faithless thrall,
Who heard the herald's words and promises.

OLAF.

Hast thou seen Hakon's body ? Art thou sure
That it is he ?

GRIF.

Aye, now 'tis he himself,
And not his mantle ; as he walked in life,
Pale and extended does he now lie there,
And blood is flowing from a dagger wound
Out of his breast.

OLAF.

Now peace be with his soul !
Take back the corpse again from whence 'twas taken,
There where 'twas found. His death doth fully
soothe

My hate, it now is quenched. Poor suffering lady,
Faithful and loving ! Give to her again
The loved remains ; but let the faithless thrall
Who slew his master suffer on the gallows.

GRIF.

Right, right, my king !

OLAF.

And now away to Hlade.
Who follows me ?

BERGTHOR.

The whole of Norway, King !

OLAF.

'Tis well. Ye all shall be my guests to-day.
 The mid-day promises an evening fair ;
 The gold horn joyously shall pass about
 In Throndhjem's groves ; to welcome me it shall
 Be drained by all.

PEOPLE.

Hail, Olaf, our king !

(They strike their shields with their swords and follow OLAF.)



THE SUBTERRANEAN CAVERN.

The lamp is still burning in the same place. Enter two servants carrying a black coffin. They put it down silently in the centre, and exeunt. Enter THYRA with a drawn sword and a large wreath of pine-leaves. She stands some time beside the coffin. At last she says,

THYRA.

So, great Earl Hakon, here thou art enshrined
 In Thyra's coffin ; in the coffin which
 Was meant for her. I ne'er had thought of this.
 Now, peace be with thy weary bones in death !
 If thou hast sinned, thou'st full atonement paid ;
 And now, let no one, with a thoughtless word,

Boldly and cruelly disgrace thy fame.
I love thee after death as in thy life.
Thou, yesterday, wast glittering in the north
Like to the sun, whence all things gain their heat,
And now, the whole of thy vast army has
Forgotten thee, to worship the new light.
A bashful woman's heart alone does beat
With silent tears in memory of thee ;
Then let her yield to thee the honour which
Thy men forgot in drunkenness of joy.

(She places the wreath and the sword upon the coffin.)

So take from Thyra's hand this living wreath.
A wreath composed of Norway's proudest pines,
Shall twine itself around thy sword, to say
Thou wast a Northern lord, as few are seen.
In future years the chronicles shall tell,
When Time's black hand has wiped the colours out,
And nought but the great outlines shall remain,
“ He was a fierce, a grim idolator.”
With shudders then thy name shall mentioned be.
I do not shudder, for I know thee well ;
Thy mightiest powers and thy largest heart
Were offered to the errors of thy time.
Sleep, then, in peace, my Hakon, sleep in peace.
Good night, and may the god of Victory
Rejoice thy warrior soul ! I go away,
And when this door again shall opened be,

Shall Thyra's servants bring her lifeless corpse
And lay it gently at her Hakon's side.

(She goes away slowly. For a little while the lamp goes on burning dimly; suddenly it flickers up and goes out. The coffin disappears in the darkness.)

THE END.



